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at Boston

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Editor's Note

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Padraig O'Malley

Of all the difficulties facing the historian in his task of understanding and discussing the past, none can be greater than that of emphatically recreating the popular 'mood' defining any particular event or period," writes Paul Kennedy. This issue of the *New England Journal of Public Policy* is about mood and politics and how synergistic interplay of the two in recent years reflects both the national and local psyche.

"Something has gone terribly wrong [about the way in which we elect our presidents]," Jack W. Germond and Jules Witcover lament in *Whose Broad Stripes and Bright Stars?*; "The American Dream is fading," says the *Wall Street Journal*; "[There is] a gnawing, growing sense that savagery and second-ratedness are increasing in America," George Will observes.

There is an uneasiness abroad, a sense of depletion, a deadened time of waiting. The military buildup in the Persian Gulf continues, but for a purpose either unsaid or best left unsaid. The economy slides ineluctably toward recession; Congress and the Bush administration wrangled petulantly over a deficit reduction program, coming to agreement only when public disgust with their performance threatened severe retribution at the ballot box; the deficit itself has become a symbol of decline as the cost of borrowing increasingly eats into limited resources.

Massachusetts, only a short time ago the proud standard-bearer of the "Massachusetts Miracle," now implodes upon itself, reducing political debate to a series of angry recriminations and counterrecriminations; the public mood settles for cynicism and the pejorative. "When jargon turns living issues into abstractions, and where jargon ends competing with jargon, people don't have causes. They only have enemies; only the enemies are real," writes V. S. Naipaul. Abroad we have Saddam Hussein; in Massachusetts we have Michael Dukakis.

In "The Nowhere Man: When the 'Miracle' Turned to Mush," David Nyhan chronicles the sad fall of Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis and the consequences for the body politic. "Much of the reputation [Dukakis] erected over three decades of public life was flattened by a hurricane of opprobrium unleashed by the . . . fiscal collapse [of Massachusetts]," says Nyhan. "His greatest political burden was the widely shared perception that [he] had misled Massachusetts voters about their fiscal plight to increase his chances of winning the White House." In the end "his public persona was so demeaned, so dehu-

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manized, that even a person well disposed toward him saw him as a bloodless figure. . . . His name became a vile epithet to thousands of voters who, taken at their word, actually *hate* him for what happened to the commonwealth on his watch.”

But in one sense, the Dukakis-bashing that has been the hallmark of politics in Massachusetts for the last two years has its roots in the cynical manipulation of the public during the presidential election of 1988. In “The Vision Thing,” Shaun O’Connell reviews a number of books whose subject matter is not merely the presidential election of 1988, but the impact of image politics in the age of the thirty-second sound bite. He quotes Neil Postman in *Amusing Ourselves to Death*: “Just as the television commercial empties itself of authentic product information so that it can do its psychological work of [pseudotherapy], image politics empties itself of authentic political sustenance for the same reason.” Politics had become theater at best, a game show at worst. “George Bush,” Germond and Witcover state, “ran a campaign distinguished by a degree of negativism and intensity that had never been seen in presidential politics in the television age — a campaign that appealed to the lowest common denominator in the electorate.” Neither candidate, the *Newsweek* team say in *The Quest for the Presidency*, “could say with any precision why [he] wanted to be president or why [he] ought to be . . . There was no agenda to fight for, only victory for its own sake.” As a result the election “was a contest of manipulation, a war between high-tech button pushers unburdened by contending visions or issues.” Neither visions nor issues! — despite the fact that during the 1980s America had transmogrified itself from being the world’s largest creditor nation to the world’s largest debtor nation; that the richest one percent of Americans received 13 percent of the nation’s aftertax income while the lowest 40 percent of Americans received 14 percent; that infant mortality rates in Washington, D.C., Detroit, or Baltimore are down to Third World levels (“Nothing that happens in Bangladesh,” according to George Will, “should be as interesting to Americans as the fact that a boy born in Harlem today has a lower life expectancy than a boy born in Bangladesh”); that the dominant generation believes that its children will have harder, not easier, lives than it has had.

One reason for this state of affairs, Douglas Fraser and Irving Bluestone argue in “The Presidential Primary: A Faulty Process,” lies in our methods of selecting political party presidential candidates — a process, they believe, that has become increasingly undemocratic. The current primary system, in their view, has undermined the effectiveness of political parties and the importance of political activists. It is a process weaned on money — an astonishing \$250,361,270 was spent during the 1988 primaries, an increase of over 100 percent in expenditures over the preceding presidential primaries. They note that “the candidates who received the most in contributions and spent the most for the campaign in contested elections were the winners.” Multiple state primaries on the same day preclude in-person, hands-on campaigning. Television is the medium and money the key. Television in turn has “created a process that has weakened the parties and created one of the least well-organized systems for choosing party leaders in the world.” The malaise shows itself in voter turnout; a mere 50 percent of eligible voters participated in the 1988 presidential election; George Bush, who received 53 percent of the active vote, received a mere 27 percent of the eligible vote. Voter participation in primaries, below 30 percent overall, was, of course, much lower, so that in a primary with a number of contestants “a candidate may garner sufficient convention votes to win the presidential nomination, yet his or her actual vote from among the eligible citizens may represent a minuscule percentage of the voting-age population.” Fraser and Bluestone make

the case for a primary process that would combine a limited primary schedule “with elevating the significance and input of party activists.”

The role of party activists as a key ingredient in restructuring the Republican State Committee is one of Andrew Natsios’s major themes in “On Being a Republican in Massachusetts: Notes of a Party Chairman.” Restructuring emphasized the provision of such campaign services to candidates and to the grassroots party organization as literature design, polling, direct mail fund-raising, telephone banks, and campaign schools. In addition, in 1987 the state committee adopted a 10 percent rule (modeled after the Democrats’ 15 percent rule), which requires a candidate to obtain 10 percent of the convention vote in order to appear on the primary ballot. Natsios defends that rule: requiring a minimum convention vote, he argues, “ensured that all candidates for statewide office would have their names placed in nomination at the convention, making a serious effort at appealing to delegates for their support. [This rule] clearly enhanced the power of the convention and the formal party organization over what it had with unrestricted ballot access.” However, three problems continue to stand between the Republicans and a return to a competitive position in state politics; Republicans must have the same financial resources available to them as Democratic candidates; they must develop credibility as a governing party; and the most serious problem in Natsios’s view is that “the Republican voter base in the state remains too small to make any dramatic improvement in the legislative or congressional delegation without the addition of new voter blocs that are not part of the National Republican Presidential Coalition.”

Two other articles round off this issue. In “Who Was That Woman I Didn’t See You With Last Night?” Norman Merrill puts the negative campaigning that is becoming the chief staple of the election process in historical perspective. Merrill writes that vicious rhetoric and invective are part of the tradition of American politics going back to the days of the Founding Fathers, and continuing through the nineteenth and into the twentieth century, a tradition that itself traces its origins to the tradition of the Roman republic, especially the sharp acerbic tongues of Cato and Cicero.

Finally, Nigel Hamilton, in “JFK: The Education of a President,” examines the ways in which his background, family, and education formed the mind and character of President John F. Kennedy. Hamilton probes Kennedy’s early years, looking for the subtle clues that would suggest a future president in the making. Certain character traits emerge at an early age: his wanting to be liked and learning very quickly how to achieve that goal. The pattern of his early life — “a strict and in many ways excellent training of the mind, on a quasi-British system of education, but with great freedom outside the classroom” — suggests a division, Hamilton posits, that “reflected a split in Jack Kennedy’s own character . . . that stemmed from his parents. . . . [He] internalized much of the tension and emotional hostility in evidence at home.”

Here in Massachusetts we have had our season of emotional hostility: the bruising statewide elections, especially for governor, and the countrywide congressional elections. Once more we found ourselves bemoaning the manner in which we trivialize our electoral processes, the absence of vision, the tawdriness of candidates’ personal attacks on one another, the shallowness of the thinking, the pointlessness of the rhetoric.

Yet, for a brief shining moment earlier this year, we were given the dimensions of that vision. “Consciousness precedes Being,” Czechoslovak President Václav Havel told a joint session of the United States Congress. “For this reason, the salvation of this human world lies nowhere else than in the human heart, in the human power to reflect, in human meekness and in human responsibility.

“Without a global revolution in the sphere of human consciousness, nothing will change for the better in the sphere of our Being as humans, and the catastrophe towards which this world is headed, whether it be ecological, social, demographic or a general breakdown of civilization, will be unavoidable. . . .

“In other words, we still don’t know how to put morality ahead of politics, science and economics. We are still incapable of understanding that the only genuine backbone of all our actions — if they are to be moral — is responsibility. Responsibility to something higher than my family, my country, my firm, my success. Responsibility to the order of Being, where all our actions are indelibly recorded and where, and only where, they will be properly judged.

“The interpreter or mediator between us and this higher authority is what is traditionally referred to as human conscience.

“If I subordinate my political behavior to this imperative mediated to me by my conscience, I can’t go far wrong.”

Jack Kennedy would have appreciated the sentiments — and the wordsmith. 🐼

The Nowhere Man

When the “Miracle” Turned to Mush

David Nyhan

He didn't steal money, go to jail, become embroiled in a personal scandal, or appoint a pack of thieves to high office, as other Massachusetts politicians have on occasion. But his fall was as dramatic as if he had done any or all of the above. From winning reelection in 1986 with 69 percent of the vote, then capturing the Democrats' presidential nomination, his fortunes sank like a stone.

Michael Stanley Dukakis, the stoic son of Greek immigrants, became a figure of ridicule in his third term. Thanks to the regional economy's sharp recession and the lingering effects of the negative radiation he absorbed in the presidential campaign, Dukakis plummeted in public esteem.

From the wand-waver of the “Massachusetts Miracle” to the dehumanized and demonized Nowhere Man of 1990, the governor and his travails are traced by a newspaper columnist who has chronicled his career.

This saga of sadness and remorse says something about Dukakis, the defining figure of Massachusetts politics over the past two decades. But it says something more about the state we are in, and the state it is in. And that, by and large, is not very complimentary.

The whole art of government consists in the art of being honest. Only aim to do your duty, and mankind will give you credit where you fail.¹

— Thomas Jefferson

This election isn't about ideology. It's about competence.”

That was all he asked: judge me on my performance. It was the standard he raised in accepting the Democrats' 1988 presidential nomination, in just those words. And competence was the flag he'd flown in winning three races for governor in Massachusetts.

Michael Stanley Dukakis built a remarkable political career on the plainest of foundations. “What you see is what you get” is how he explained himself a thousand times to the citizens of states far from where he'd been three times elected governor. Short, slim, polite, friendly, but all business: You may not find me particularly warm and cuddly. You may not like my philosophy of activist, do-something-about-it government. I'm not your

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basic song-and-dance man; no smile-and-a-shoeshine politician. But if you want your government competently run, I'm your man.

That was his pitch. It went over big with the homefolks, sleek with pride in the economic gains that made Massachusetts the go-go state of the mid-1980s. The voters purred as good times crested in the high-tech, defense, banking, insurance, and service sectors that flourished in Boston and its suburbs.

The voters who'd elected him over incumbent Francis Sargent in 1974, then dumped him for maverick Democrat Edward King in 1978, brought him back in 1982, then gave him the keys a third time. Dukakis was reelected in 1986 with 69 percent of the vote, crushing Republican George Kariotis in the most lopsided gubernatorial election in Massachusetts for more than a century. He wrote, in a 1988 book with economist Rosabeth Moss Kanter,

When I began my first term as governor in 1975, Massachusetts, like so many other industrial states, was in its worst economic condition since the Great Depression. We were called the New Appalachia . . . Statewide unemployment hit a high of 12.3 percent, and over 330,000 workingwomen and workingmen were without jobs . . . Since then, Massachusetts has not only bounced back a second time [the 1983 recession] but achieved a level of economic success that stands as an example of what is possible for America . . . Employment in Massachusetts rose from 2.27 million in 1975 to 3 million in 1987.²

This was the meat and gravy of politics, extolling the "Massachusetts Miracle." That juicy little tidbit of alliterative sloganeering eventually made him gag. Mouthing off about some kind of miracle came back to haunt the Duke. But as late as 1988, using all the optimistic, can-do catchwords that came to serve as the shorthand vocabulary of his successful presidential primary campaign — "diversity . . . fiscal health . . . private-public partnership . . . infrastructure . . . investing in people" — Dukakis promoted his economic competence far and wide.

True, he occasionally dismissed the "miracle" label as showy, exaggerated, non-lawyerly, even *un-Duke-like*. But in their book published just before the 1988 campaign, *Dukakis: An American Odyssey*, two of my *Boston Globe* colleagues, Charles Kenney and Robert L. Turner, went over the "miracle" claims in exquisite detail.

He does not shy away from taking at least some credit, and has not been reticent about describing the situation as "the most extraordinary economic turnaround of any state, maybe, in the history of the United States" . . . Perhaps the closest he has come to taking primary credit for having made the miracle happen was when he said in August 1987 that "the first question I'm asked wherever I go is, 'Can you do it for us here?' And my answer is, 'Yes, we can.'"³

So what happened?

Dukakis got himself nominated for president by running a shrewd and skillful primary election campaign. He impressed everyone, and shook the Republican Party to its roots, by stage-managing the Democrats' most successful national convention since 1976 (the year Jimmy Carter captured for the Democrats the only national election they have won in the last six). Then he ran a disorganized, largely themeless campaign for the general election. And got himself clocked.

He lost forty of the fifty states. The most richly detailed and relentlessly documented account of his defeat is contained in a book written by two more of my *Boston Globe* colleagues, Christine Black and Thomas Oliphant, *All by Myself*. Their bottom line:

He was in most respects an ideal candidate for the long grind in the primaries: disciplined, steady, the safest of bets. Dukakis failed to realize that in presidential politics the hurdles get higher as you go down the track. Trapped within his self-sufficiency, he never prepared himself to clear them . . . With the hopes of millions of Americans riding on him by then, however, he had no right not to be ready for that frenzy, no right especially after having been told what he would face . . .

In the final phase of a presidential election, however, there is no time for retailing; you either make the grand gesture, you either fight for the prize, or you are almost certain to lose, especially to the determined cynicism in a crusade of vilification. We believe that when the crunch came, Dukakis was overwhelmed.⁴

So. He ran. He lost. And he came home as if nothing had changed, and he still had command of all the weapons in his arsenal, with all their potency, that were his before he lost the presidency. Wrong, wrong, wrong, Michael.

Next, for a combination of personal, public, and political reasons, he decided to finish out the remaining two years of his third term as governor. Some advisers suggested he resign the governorship in the summer of 1988 and chuck the problems of running the state: dedicate yourself totally to the presidential campaign. Others felt that after the crushing loss in November 1988, the wiser course was to say: Thanks, it's been great, but my heart is no longer in it. I want more time with my family, so I resign as governor. Let Evelyn Murphy, the lieutenant governor, take over for the last two years of our term.

Dukakis, as he did everything else, did it his way: he would persevere. Continue to govern. Keep on keeping on. And run the state with his customary dignity and dedication till his time was up. That decision proved disastrous for his political fortunes. Much of the reputation he'd erected over three decades of public life was flattened by a hurricane of opprobrium unleashed by the ensuing fiscal collapse.

Proclaiming himself a lame duck in the January 1989 State of the State message was a decision that was to emasculate his initiatives in the legislature. But even more devastating to his final two years in office was the steep economic decline that made a mockery of his administration's revenue projections and precipitated the fiscal crisis that shredded Dukakis's reputation.

All through the mid-1980s Massachusetts unemployment was the lowest of any industrial state, dipping to 2.7 percent in 1988. But two years later it was climbing steeply, to 6.1 percent in July 1990. Massachusetts exceeded the national rate of 5.5 percent for the first time in a decade, and jobs were evaporating in manufacturing, construction, computers, and defense. In that month the commonwealth lost 57,000 jobs, a rate of more than 1,800 jobs per day. By late September 1990, the administration was looking at a job loss that had reached 100,000 for the year and projected another 80,000 loss for the ensuing year that would put unemployment over 8 percent.

All the New England states were hard hit by the downturn, but it was Massachusetts that drove the region's economy, Massachusetts workers whose wages had gone up as much as 10 percent per year. And it was the politicians on duty in Massachusetts who caught the most flak when the downturn came.

Of those, by far the most inviting target was the governor. Beyond the complexities of a downwardly spiraling economy lay the implacable resentment of the electorate. Dukakis somehow came to serve as the emotional catch basin, the totem for everything bad that happened. If you lost your job, couldn't sell your house, suffered cuts in services, had to pay more in taxes, a handy little scapegoat was right at hand: Dukakis. Forget the sins of bankers, computer executives, developers, entrepreneurs. It was all the Duke's fault. His

hallmark over decades in Massachusetts politics had been his integrity. Now he suddenly became a liar who'd touted the nation on the virtues of the Massachusetts Miracle only to come home to a state economy that rapidly descended into shambles.

Never mind that every other state in the Northeast, from Virginia to Maine, soon followed Massachusetts on the path to red ink. Their governors had not run for president — and lost. His greatest political burden was the widely shared perception that Dukakis had misled Massachusetts voters about their fiscal plight to increase his chances of winning the White House.

Two weeks before Dukakis was nominated for president, the following warning was spread wide upon the front page of the *Boston Globe*: "The chaos surrounding the Massachusetts budget, both for the current fiscal year and the one just ended, has moved beyond eye-glazing home-state financial arcana and has emerged as a national political issue that could significantly undermine Gov. Dukakis' preferred image as a competent manager and economic wizard."⁵

Later Dukakis would claim that he tried to trim the state's economic sails. "I vetoed \$200 million in spending approved by the Legislature on the day I left for Atlanta (and the Democratic national convention) back in 1988," Dukakis told me in a September 1990 interview. But it was too little, too late, at every stage of a dizzying two-year descent to BBB bond ratings. The low point came in that September with an emergency \$310 million state budget cut that was virtually dictated at gunpoint by Wall Street bond dealers. They threatened to reduce the state's bond rating to junk level unless the budget was brought into precarious balance.

This seems to be the bottom line of the widespread disenchantment with the governor: he, and his key aides, kept touting the effectiveness of his governing, after the state plateaued and began nosing down. It did not matter that the shrewdest businessmen in the state were similarly gulled, or that there had been ample warning signs.

In another state, or with another politician, that might not seem like much: a little exaggeration, a little fudging, a little buck passing, a little song and dance, and the damage might not be nearly so severe. For Dukakis, the economic roller coaster took him right into the cellar, below the level of political respectability into the dank netherworld of approval ratings below 20 percent. "Serial killers do not have approval ratings as low as 20 percent," cracked one political technician shaking his head over the Duke's polling numbers.

Why did he fall from grace, fall so far, so fast, and with such sickening, stomach-churning momentum that his friends and supporters winced at his fate? The answer is complex.

Where do you start in cataloguing the reasons? Were they personal? Of course. And political, economic, social, historical. There were hundreds of reasons, once you started looking for reasons, but no one could say, not even the Duke himself, which mattered most. One of the newspapermen who'd chronicled his rise over twenty years put it this way: "You never hear him say, 'I was wrong, I made a mistake, it's my fault.' That's his problem."

Beginning on the day after the presidential election, in speeches and in news conferences, Dukakis nibbled away at the hard cheese of admitting flaws. But his rationalizations never bought him any understanding. People weren't buying it. Why?

A lot of it had to do with hard times at home, a steep, sharp, severe downturn in the economy that caught everyone flat-footed. Knocking Dukakis became a way of venting

fury for all the Establishment figures who failed to discern the rocky road ahead for the old Massachusetts Miracle. The computer wizards, the high-flying high-tech crowd, the investment bankers, the go-go real estate developers, hot-shot businessmen who expanded too fast, Boston-based bankers who kept lending after real estate crested, they all crashed along with the handlers of state government. But nobody had voted for them.

The closest I ever heard Dukakis come to trying to spread some of the blame to the captains of industry, development, computers, and finance who presided over declines in their enterprises was when he talked one afternoon about bad bank loans: "Hey, the *state* didn't make any of those loans."

There were a number of political trends, some specific to Massachusetts, others derived from the nation at large, that conspired to frustrate the governor. Washington had steadily trimmed back the flow of money to the states and local governments in the 1980s. The year before Ronald Reagan took office only 76 percent of all state and local spending came from state and local taxes. In George Bush's first year in office, that was up to 83 percent.⁶

Like forty-nine other governors, Dukakis was hemmed in by a decade of presidential prevaricating about the need for new taxes. Ronald Reagan tripled the national debt on his eight-year watch. George Bush added two years of "No new taxes" and "Read my lips" before finally breaking his vow halfway through his term. Under Reagan and Bush, the Republicans embraced the no-new-taxes-are-necessary theme. And the public bought it. Two popular presidents spent ten years persuading the folks that more taxes were unnecessary. Never mind that thirty-four states were in the red by the summer of 1990. The president says we don't need new taxes, and that's that. Period.

Then there was a new phenomenon, discernible here as well as in states far from Massachusetts: a decreasing willingness, or an increasing unwillingness, of one voting bloc to support the needs of another. As voters came to pick and choose among ballot referenda, or Proposition 2½ overrides, or school bond issues, the trend became unmistakable. Yes for what helps me, no for what helps you. The elderly wanted money for their ambulance attendants or meals or medical programs that benefited their age bracket, but they voted resoundingly against spending public money on schools or playgrounds.

What was meat and drink to one ethnic or class grouping was fat and waste to another. With the federal government retrenching from domestic programs, with Proposition 2½ limiting how much real estate tax money a city or town could pour into maintaining services or schools, the state was forced to fill the gap. During the flush times of the mid-1980s, when the state's tax yield vaulted up by 10 or 12 or 15 percent in yearly increments, it was possible to pick up the slack by increasing local aid. By 1990 the typical Bay State city or town got 37 percent of its money directly from the state tax pool — \$2 billion worth.

But when the tax haul began to dwindle, and legislators cast about for ways to cut expenses, the various lobbying groups fell upon each other with gusto. There was a sharp increase in angst. Bitter charges were flung hither and yon. One of the few principles on which pleaders for special interests agreed was that the governor and the legislature were sure doing a lousy job of managing this downturn.

The legislature became a killing ground for civility and intelligent discourse, polarized between taxers and antitaxers. Barely one fifth of the 160-member House and 40-member Senate had served a decade or more, so few had ever had to vote to raise taxes in the midst of an economic downturn. That task proved too daunting for them until, in July 1990,

fully two years after the state budget was acknowledged to be on the skids, a major billion-dollar-plus tax package was finally wrung from the bitterly divided legislators.

Running a close second to Dukakis in terms of public scorn was the legislature and its leadership. House Speaker George Keverian, Democrat of Everett, tried to conduct a statewide campaign for the office of treasurer and receiver general while he was trying to construct a tax package that would meet the revenue need and attract a majority of votes on the House floor.

Cruelly lampooned by some in the media, deserted by a number of his own leadership appointees, and repeatedly undercut by his archrival on the third floor, Senate President William Bulger, Keverian was savagely battered from all sides. By early August 1990, after a massive tax package was finally cemented into place, Keverian went public with his distaste for Bulger: "I don't respect his style of leadership, and that's what it's all about." It is safe to assume that Bulger returned the sentiment.

Even some of his closest allies threw up their hands at Keverian's backing and filling. The Speaker talked repeatedly of the antagonism he encountered in the street and on the campaign trail. Voters were furious, and he was a big target. In September he was defeated in the Democratic primary for treasurer.

Even though both House and Senate were lopsidedly Democratic in numbers — approximately 4 to 1 in both branches — the House leadership lost control of the Democrats early on in the financial swoon. Keverian was every bit as much of a lame duck as Dukakis, a factor underappreciated by those outside the legislature. A vote for taxes is a painful vote to a legislator, who quickly learns that you make people happy by giving them money for their program or pay raise, and you make people *unhappy* by taking money from them in taxes.

Legislators calculated, selfishly to be sure, but coldly and logically, that Dukakis, on his way out, did not have to defend a vote for higher taxes in the next election. Thus it would make more political sense to await the blandishments of the new governor before giving away a vote for taxes. These same legislators, some of them longtime friends of Keverian, many of them beneficiaries of his largess as Speaker, decided to stiff Good Old George just as they stiffed that no-good blankety-blank so-and-so in the corner office. Why not wait and make your deal with the next Speaker?

As the Democratic establishment came under increasing pressure, it began to melt down. There was a pronounced bifurcation of the nearly seamless web of Democratic officeholders in the one-party state. The Washington crowd, Senators Edward Kennedy and John Kerry, and the ten or eleven congressmen who were Democrats, gave the state fiscal problems a good leaving alone.

In the election year the Democrats were assailed as top-heavy, corrupt, out of touch. Scandals, old and new, were recycled. Sexual problems, money problems, marital problems, conflict of interest problems, dotted the media landscape. The Democrats appeared to be leaderless, inept, disorganized, distracted. The party had no enthusiasm, no confidence; it seemed to languish like communism under Leonid Brezhnev.

The Republicans, trying to win back the governor's office for the first time in twenty years, pounced gleefully on every Democratic miscue. One of the striking differences between Massachusetts and states like Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey was the relative impotence of the GOP in Massachusetts. Those other northeast states suffered virtually the same kind of economic distress and sinking tax yields. Still, Republicans there were part of the solution. They had sufficient clout in their legislatures — control-

ling the majority in some branches — so that Democratic governors had to deal with them and include them in any recovery plans with a chance of passage.

Massachusetts Republicans settled on this strategy: oppose any and all taxes, period, no matter how broke the state gets. Fiscal stability and the bond rating were risked in hopes of winning the governor's office for the first time since Frank Sargent turned it over to — ugh — Dukakis in 1974.

The attempt to paint the Democrats as profligate spenders took an international turn when, in a speech at Harvard, Republican gubernatorial candidate William F. Weld said Bay State Democrats were mired in “a European-Socialist philosophy.”⁷ Such a sobriquet must have come as a shock to the reps propping up the bar at the Golden Dome pub.

Under the generally articulate command of House Minority Leader Steven Pierce, Republican of Westfield, who based his campaign for the GOP gubernatorial nomination on a no-new-taxes-for-the-next-four-years pledge, House Republicans settled for fanning the media flames of antitax fever.

To Pierce's barbs were added the slightly more humorous, but often just as acerbic, wisecracks of House Taxation Committee Chairman John Flood, Democrat of Canton, a former telephone company pole-climber-turned-lawyer. He campaigned for governor as a Democratic fiscal conservative until he fell short of the 15 percent delegate total threshold at the Democratic state convention in early June, and missed making the ballot.

With the Republicans in full cry, and Democratic defectors rallying behind born-again antitaxers like Flood, Keverian and Dukakis found themselves fishing for protax votes in a steadily diminishing pool. Dukakis and his cadre of inner-circle adviser-survivors sought to enlist the help of groups that benefited from state spending. But such groups were largely late and lame when it came time to deliver specific votes in the House.

Labor unions, government employees, and groups that had succeeded in lobbying legislatures for ever-higher spending programs also found they had worn out their welcome with the public at large. The people were furious over what a large majority perceived to be waste, fat, fraud, and mismanagement on a vast scale in state government.

There was a corresponding surge in the influence of commerce, business organizations, industry lobbyists, and trade groups. “For the first time in my career,” said a retired legislative leader now working as an occasional lobbyist, “members were calling lobbyists to find out what was going on, instead of vice versa.”

Particularly effective at the end of the 1980s was the Massachusetts High Tech Council, which had spearheaded antitax sentiments. Its chief executive, Howard Foley, was the principal architect of a draconian tax and fee rollback intended to capitalize on antitax sentiment by asking voters if they wanted to repeal, with a November 1990 referendum vote, all tax increases and fee hikes imposed by the state since the middle of 1988. Opponents predicted widespread dislocation and disruption if a projected \$3.8 billion was stripped from the precariously balanced \$13 billion state budget over a period of eighteen months.

“We’re in yahoo time in politics in this state,” said Robert J. Bezucha, a history professor at Amherst College in his fourth year as a member of the board of trustees of Westfield (Massachusetts) State College. “Our bond rating is right down there with Louisiana, and we don’t even have Earl in the corner office. We’re the only state that has actually *reduced* funding for higher education. Virtually all the candidates running for governor beat up on higher education. They treat it [as if] it’s the public works department.”⁸

A raucous rump media trio calling itself The Governors was formed by Citizens for

Limited Taxation lobbyist Barbara Anderson, WRKO talk show host Jerry Williams, and *Boston Herald* columnist Howie Carr. They formed a bumptious clique braying denunciations of Dukakis and the “hacks” of State House politics. The talk show trashing of anyone who suggested that new taxes were needed helped delay, but could not forestall, the eventual adoption of a series of unpopular tax hikes.

In 1989 Williams was given an award for public service by a delighted Republican State Committee. What was even more surprising was Jerry showing up to claim it. The systematic denigration of state political figures became such an enjoyable blood sport that the lowbrow humor of Howie Carr was declared fit for the elite viewers of the *Ten O’Clock News* on Boston’s PBS outlet, Channel 2. Carr was featured till a viewer/contributor revolt caused that connection to be quietly severed. Channel 2’s change of heart notwithstanding, the barbs of “The Governors” echoed in the State House. They found a ready audience among not just the outnumbered Republicans, but with such conservative Democrats as Greg Sullivan of Norwood, who abandoned the leadership for conservative bedfellows in the media.

Talk radio became a sort of bulletin board for antitax activists. Station managers were thrilled. Advertising income depends on numbers of listeners, and one surefire way of drawing a horde on the crowded dial was to emphasize denunciations of tax hikes. No one liked to raise taxes, but radio-borne theories about conspiracies, waste, fraud, and dirty deeds in the political world fleshed out a vision of a conspiratorial world with good guys, bad guys, and all sorts of side plots.

Dukakis made no dent in the cacophony, despite repeated efforts like his May 15, 1990, speech to the Boston Chamber of Commerce.

First, some facts about taxes and spending in Massachusetts: Massachusetts is now the third wealthiest state in America. Over the past nine years, we’ve had the highest rate of growth in personal income of any state in the nation. Our revenue burden — state and local taxes and fees as a percentage of personal income — is currently the eighth lowest in the country . . . Our property taxes are the lowest in the Northeast . . . The number of state, country, and municipal employees in Massachusetts, per capita, is below the national average.

The public largely ignored his explanations. As when protesting in the presidential campaign that he was neither unpatriotic nor uncaring toward his wife, Dukakis seemed to be shouting into a wind that snatched his words away without effect. Having been effectively dehumanized by the Republican presidential campaign, Dukakis was denied a hearing on the tax and spending issues. People had become used to tuning him out. They did it automatically.

Massachusetts was not alone in giving talk radio a shot in the ratings arm with contentious dialogue. New Jersey Governor James Florio hiked taxes and won himself a built-in radio clique of critics. “In a state without a network television station, WKXW has transformed itself almost overnight from a soothing ‘adult contemporary’ music station into the nerve center of what is becoming an angry revolt against tax increases rammed through the Legislature by the new governor,” the *New York Times* reported. “The station has become the focal point for anti-Florio sentiment.”

New Jersey is the state most like Massachusetts in some ways. It is the same size (population 6 million), has a similar industrial mix, an educated work force, and so on. If there is a Massachusetts clone, it is the Garden State. It did not seem to register on the Bay State political and media establishment that while Dukakis was mud wrestling with the legisla-

ture to win passage of a \$1.4 billion tax package, Governor Florio rammed home a \$2.8 billion package for the Garden State. So harsh was the reaction, according to the *New York Times*, that “barely six months after taking office, Gov. Jim Florio is confronted with a growing tax revolt that is fast turning into a general wave of discontent threatening his dominance of the machinery of government in New Jersey.”¹⁰

In the first six months of 1990, legislative discipline had more or less collapsed in the Massachusetts House of Representatives. The House is the key legislative body because, under the state constitution, all tax and spending measures must originate there.

Fragile majorities of eighty-one votes for new taxes crumbled repeatedly under the withering fire of antitax forces. Casting about repeatedly for support in the business community and among the professions, Dukakis and Keverian found their pleas largely ignored. They discovered that the business community, the Establishment, wanted little part of the struggle.

Many businessmen had their own problems. Where big bankers and insurance executives in decades past had exercised vast clout in the inner circles of government, that was no longer the case. The Vault, an informal organization of Boston’s largest employers, played virtually no role in the searing public debate over the state’s fiscal fortunes. As bond ratings plunged to BBB, the lowest of any state on the Standard and Poor’s ranking, the business community remained on the sidelines.

A few braved the brickbats. John Gould, the chief executive of the largest industry lobby, Associated Industries of Massachusetts, met repeatedly with government and business leaders to try to restore some semblance of sanity amidst the fiscal free-fall. But the vilification and controversy ladled out in the newspapers and the talk shows by antitax spokesmen seemed to intimidate most business leaders. One high-ranking bank executive who headed a gubernatorial committee was denounced as “a fat-cat banker” by CLT spokesman Anderson for not being sufficiently antitax. That example was not lost on his brethren, who had their own problems in the credit and real estate crunch that left some of New England’s strongest banks reeling. The net effect was that most businessmen slunk away from any meaningful role in addressing the fiscal crisis.

The business Establishment seemed to have been deconstructed. Private sector figures who in decades past assumed leading roles in the community were no longer as evident. Many corporations that were previously headquartered in Boston had been absorbed by even larger organizations elsewhere. “They’re all branch managers here now,” grumped one business lobbyist trying to raise funds to fend off the CLT petition in the November referendum. And the men who remained in Boston could no longer call the shots the way their predecessors had in the 1970s and 1980s.

The media were filled with a good deal more negativity. Those with an interest in public policy, or raising or lowering the taxation level, discovered the effectiveness of the kinds of negative advertising that had come to characterize political campaigns. The “Willie Hortonizing” of Massachusetts politics meant that those who dared enter the fray on either side risked a mud bath from groups opposed to their goals. “You’ve got to understand that a banker or business leader has thousands of customers, some of whom feel very strongly about taxes, and those businessmen take a risk if they raise a voice against CLT, a risk of retaliation by some of their customer base,” said one anti-CLT organizer.

The political toll was evident in other states. Connecticut Governor William O’Neill and Vermont Governor Madeleine Kunin, forced, like Dukakis, to raise taxes, decided not to run again when polls showed they faced expensive uphill struggles. Rhode Island’s Republican Governor Edward DiPrete ran into the same kind of political buzz saw that had

chipped the bark off Dukakis's hide. Virginia's new Democratic Governor Douglas Wilder encountered his own fiscal sandstorm. Republican incumbents Judd Gregg in New Hampshire and John McKernan in Maine scrambled to cover shortfalls that were roughly proportional to those of Massachusetts. Only New York's Mario Cuomo, facing token Republican opposition, seemed to escape the blight that affected every other northeastern state incumbent.

But none of these others had run for president brandishing their competence. And lost. None had to live down the taunts of the Massachusetts Miracle. Dukakis had been highly touted as a consensus builder, an architect of compromise, a healer of wounds, and a mid-wife of compromise during the glory years of the Massachusetts Miracle. But that touch eluded him when he needed it most. He became, almost eerily, a kind of nonperson in public gatherings, shunned by those who wished to make a favorable impression on the populace.

The night that Nelson Mandela appeared before a huge and rapturous throng on the Esplanade in the summer of 1990, various local dignitaries greeted the wildly popular South African leader. When Mandela thanked Dukakis for being one of the first American governors to lend his support to the imprisoned black leader's cause, the crowd's mood turned briefly ugly.

A nineteen-year-old woman who was present said afterward, "That was the only ugly part of the whole day. All my friends had been singing and clapping and cheering for Mandela, and then when he thanked Dukakis, my friends started booing and jeering. Why do they do that, when Dukakis was one of the politicians who really tried to help the black effort there? Some of my friends blame Dukakis for not being able to get a job this summer. But is that really his fault? It made me sick."

The opprobrium that became Dukakis's steady diet unsettled even some who were sympathetic to him. A Greek-American woman who voted for him told me she dreamed about the governor. "I had a dream. And in my dream, he was stabbed — but he *didn't bleed*." His public persona was so demeaned, so dehumanized, that even a person well disposed toward him saw him as a bloodless figure. Another woman who was heartsick at what had happened to the liberal champion of 1988 turned from a television image of a chastened Dukakis waiting to address a surly legislature and said sadly, "He looks so small, so *diminished*."

There was little question that Dukakis's stature as a national leader had shrunk by the end of the presidential campaign. His negative ratings soared as the Republicans used millions of dollars' worth of negative television advertising to sow doubts about his patriotism, his values, and his record.

Dukakis was badly mauled in the 1988 general election campaign, concluded Jack W. Germond and Jules Witcover in *Whose Broad Stripes and Bright Stars? The Trivial Pursuit of the Presidency, 1988*. The Bush campaign, they wrote, "made a conscious and critical strategic decision to define Dukakis in the most negative way possible as the most effective means to combat the voters' very negative view of Bush . . . In the hands of Bush's hired guns, the concept of campaign as educational exercise crumbled before the concept of campaign as warfare, and Dukakis was gunned down in the process."¹¹

Then there's "the loser thing," as George Bush might have put it had *he* lost. In American politics at the highest level there is no second place, no silver medal. Winning is better, because winning is all. Winners, if they don't write the history books of political campaigns, get the lion's share of attention from those who do the writing. Dukakis won more votes, more states, and more counties than Walter Mondale, than Jimmy Carter,

than George McGovern, the last three men to precede him as Democratic nominee. It mattered not. He *lost*. And many of those who voted for him were furious at the way he lost.

He let Bush and the conservatives tarnish liberalism and demean the patriotism and common sense and goodness not only of Dukakis but, by electoral implication, of all those who supported him. When the Bush wrecking crew of James W. Baker, John Sununu, Roger Ailes, and Lee Atwater got through with Dukakis, he was a mess. You were a sucker if you voted for this sorry sad sack was the prevailing negative message of the Bush campaign. It was propped up neatly by the positive theme, the “kinder, gentler” Bush, whose paid commercials showed him hoisting handsome grandchildren for a grandfatherly snuggle. But what they did to Dukakis was not pretty, not kind, not gentle. Dukakis wound up with 42 million votes and relatively few friends, because so many of those who voted for him were angry that he hadn’t fought harder.

“Loserhood is the *bête noire* of Americans; it is the condition that MBAs and college students throughout the United States fear most,” wrote Donald L. Kanter and Philip H. Mirvis in a book analyzing cynicism at the end of the 1980s. “. . . In America, trust and respect are only grudgingly given, if at all, to anyone who is not an obvious winner.”¹²

Kanter and Mirvis advance the thesis that “the 1980s can be characterized as the cynical decade, and that the Reagan presidency, while contributing to a fast-paced cycle of high hopes and disillusionment, has been only one of many ingredients in the public’s increasingly jaded outlook.” They carried it a step further, to Reagan’s surrogate-replacement and political heir.

The election of 1988 is a case in point. The campaign of George Bush demonstrated that fear and fantasy can beat complacency and generalities among that portion of the electorate that bothered to vote . . . Initial appeals to idealism and community were forsaken for the expediency of negative campaigning, in the one case [Bush] and divisiveness, in the other [Dukakis]. It was almost a repeat of the previous election, when a cynical electorate told Walter Mondale that looking out for oneself was more important than reaching out to the less privileged.¹³

Others, like Elizabeth Drew, saw Dukakis as fatally flawed in his slowness to sense what was being done to him.

What Dukakis said or failed to say in his campaign is only part of his problem: the other part — probably the larger one — has been Bush’s ability to paint Dukakis as a liberal, out of touch with the mainstream. Yet Dukakis, by his slowness to react, or even to see the peril in what Bush was doing to him, became an accomplice in Bush’s strategy.¹⁴

The Bush White House staff was headed by an old Dukakis enemy, former New Hampshire Governor John Sununu. The Bush camp took an unusual interest in scotching Dukakis at every turn. One of Bush’s top political aides, Bay State native Ron Kaufman, turned up on June 2, 1990, at the Democratic state convention, of all places. Dukakis’s farewell speech to his party was delayed five hours by an unexpected Springfield police union picket line. In the turmoil that followed, some Republican political operatives claimed Kaufman played a role in fomenting the disruption. The Democratic State Committee sued Kaufman as a result. President Bush, it was reliably reported, was furious that Kaufman got caught skulking around Dukakis’s convention. Said a Republican who knew Kaufman and his brother-in-law, Andrew Card, another Bush assistant: “Andy and Ron

regard the 1990 governor's race in Massachusetts as the logical conclusion of the 1988 presidential campaign."

Massachusetts Republicans, after twenty years in the wilderness, concluded that their best chance in two decades depended upon their further demonizing Dukakis with the already disenchanted Massachusetts voters. The tool kit of each Dukakis Republican critic contained the same three basic implements. These were contentions that (1) he had lied about the health of the Massachusetts economy; (2) he had spent too freely to cadge votes and appease special interests; and (3) he delighted in dipping a sticky paw into the pockets of the hard-pressed taxpayers.

Measured against the record of the man who defeated him, the defense could go like this: (1) Lies? Did George Bush come clean on the savings and loan crisis, or Iran-contra, or Pentagon procurement corruption, or white-collar crime in the financial markets, or the devastating mismanagement in the nuclear weapons industry? (2) Spending? Whose mismanagement cost the taxpayers more? Mine, or Bush's record with the deficit, with military spending, with farm supports, with Medicaid? (3) Taxes? I never said, "Read my lips — no new taxes," then turned around and broke that pledge two years after the election.

As Dukakis's favorability sank, Bush's remained at record-high levels for a president halfway through his first term, assisted mightily by the virtual collapse of the communist cartel. A poll released in June 1990 by the Becker Institute for business clients among 500 likely Massachusetts voters found that 77 percent held an unfavorable opinion of Dukakis and 68 percent rated the legislature unfavorably.

Dukakis fared better, but still not well, in a national survey conducted in early April 1990. Among 1,005 registered voters across the country selected by a pollster for the *Boston Globe* and WBZ-TV, 49 percent of the overall sample viewed Dukakis unfavorably, while Bush was seen in a favorable light by 77 percent of the same voters. Bush's popularity stayed high despite the torrent of red ink that poured out of Washington.

Bush's top budgeteer, Richard Darman, warned that mandatory cuts in government programs "of totally unprecedented size" loomed for October, triggered by automatic spending cuts imposed by the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings deficit reduction law. The prospect of lopping off a million military personnel, increasing air travel delays by 600 percent, wiping out Pell grants for 3.4 million college students, cutting 200,000 preschoolers from Head Start, reducing drug research and treatment by one-third, mirrored on a national scale the kinds of disruptions taking place on the state level in Massachusetts. But Bush's popularity seemed insulated from any voter retribution.

At home, Dukakis's media enemies mocked his standing yet, curiously, kept warning the unwary that this sly fellow might try again to run for president. Democrats in Iowa, the first caucus state, who'd delivered the state for him in 1988, continued to hold Dukakis in higher regard than the Massachusetts electorate. But many of the people who supported Dukakis in his first presidential effort winced at the thought of his trying again after the turmoil of 1990.

Some who'd voted for Dukakis over Bush had second thoughts. "He never grew," said a powerful media executive who'd admired Dukakis over two decades in which the governor moved from being a little-known state representative to the front-running candidate for president of the United States. "[Dukakis] didn't expand, he didn't change, he didn't absorb experiences and turn them into something that made him bigger, as Jack Kennedy did."

To a political insider who'd been much closer to Dukakis, the fault was not so much in his capacity for growth as in his hearing. "He doesn't listen," said a person who'd been a key operative in the presidential campaign. "He doesn't *listen*!"

That trait of tuning out advice he didn't want to take looms large in the minds of some journalists who followed Dukakis's career, like the *Boston Herald*'s Peter Lucas, who wrote in 1989:

He did not listen to people then — when aides, advisers and fellow politicians told him what he had to do to win. And there is no sign that he is listening now, when aides, advisers and fellow politicians are telling him that his credibility is shot so full of holes that he cannot raise taxes without making more budget cuts. Dukakis listens only to himself.

For reasons that defy adequate explanation, Dukakis for a long time resisted advice to try to get ahead of the antitax wave that swept the legislature to the brink of hysteria. A number of knowledgeable politicians urged him to make symbolic cuts in controversial areas: fire some executive department press secretaries, reduce the number of legislative doorkeepers and pages, call for the legislature to eliminate its research bureau, list specific jobs being vacated.

He resisted such entreaties as unworthy. That would be surrendering to the mob, he seemed to imply. As it turned out, Dukakis eventually cut 5,000 full-time employees from the state payroll, by attrition, transfers, early retirements, and a hiring freeze. He got rid of 3,000 part-time jobs. But so long did it take, so ineptly was it promoted, that he got little credit for it with the media, or the taxpayers at large. It was as if the Duke did not deign to play the silly games the media and the legislature were forcing on him.

His stubbornness won this tribute from Lucas, a boxing fan, in a July 1990 interview with me: "Dukakis has proved one thing to me: he showed he can take a punch. A lot of lesser guys would have been down for the count. The Duke is still standing. That's impressive, whether you agree with him or not."

The campaign manager for John Silber, one of the Democratic candidates who sought to replace Dukakis, was Robert Donahue, a veteran of Massachusetts campaigns, as well as the presidential efforts of George McGovern and Jimmy Carter. Donahue traced Dukakis's dilemma to being a lame duck for two long years. "The most tragic mistake he made was when he announced he wouldn't run for reelection. That made for the longest 'lame-duckness' I've ever seen. He opened up a vacuum that turned into a black hole."

It is undeniable that the success Dukakis achieved with the legislature up to the middle of 1988 evaporated. Legislators who had quaked at the thought of denying him a vote became lions overnight. The raw power of a governor in dealing with the microcosm that is the world of most legislators suddenly disappeared. The munchkins of Lilliput rounded on the once-mighty Duke. "State reps whom you could have intimidated or bought off with a dozen summer jobs for their relatives or their constituents suddenly found some courage and began yelling for his head," said one saturnine veteran of the State House patronage process.

For a governor to declare two years in advance of his departure that he is leaving is highly unusual. It changes the picture dramatically, particularly in dealing with legislators. There is a great deal of bluff and bluster between executive and legislative branches, not only in Massachusetts but in every state capitol, and in the Congress to boot. The U.S. Marine Corps and the penal system are not the only branches of government that rely

upon the principle of motivational fear to coerce obedience. Every governor, every president, must threaten, and occasionally deliver on said threats, to compel behavior that a legislator might otherwise find distasteful, uncomfortable, even repulsive. The Duke turned himself into a lion tamer without a chair. Or whip. Or pistol. And the cowardly lions of Beacon Hill became tigers against taxes.

If it is relatively easy to trace how Dukakis became estranged from the House membership, it is much harder to assay the degree to which Kitty Dukakis's problems affected how the state was governed. On the eve of the first anniversary of her husband's losing the White House, Kitty Dukakis drank some rubbing alcohol, collapsed, and was rushed to the hospital. Eight months before that, she'd professed that she was an alcoholic, that her problem had been with her for some time. She entered a residential treatment facility in Rhode Island. She discussed some details of her chemical dependency and emotional problems in *Now You Know*, published by Simon and Schuster.

How much of Dukakis's swoon was traceable to the pressure of his domestic life brought to bear by Kitty's professed drug and alcohol dependency and the emotional burden that piled atop the normal wear and tear of political life? Only Dukakis knows. And he has adamantly refused to cite it as a factor in his political difficulties. He never blamed his personal situation for any of his political problems. He never pitched for sympathy because of his wife's repeated hospitalizations. He never rounded on his critics by implying their rebukes were somehow unfair because of the suffering with which Kitty and her family had to cope.

But because this kind of thing cannot be measured does not mean it didn't count. The weight of worry and apprehension, the never-ending confidential calculations about her condition, must have taken their toll, not only during the presidential primary campaign but throughout the bitter months that ensued: How's Kitty today? Is she up to the schedule? Can she get through this interview? Make that speech? Put up with all the "loser-loser-loser" questions from the reporters? Will she break and say something nasty to an unfriendly crowd? What about when she gets back to the hotel tonight? How will she handle it? Will she be able to get up and get on the plane at six in the morning? Is she smoking? Drinking? Is she taking pills?

There were pressures of equal magnitude on the family of George Bush, as there are on the spouses and children of every man who makes the final round of two for the presidency. How would Bush have handled it if his beloved Barbara were afflicted with problems similar to Kitty's? Would he have endured as stoically? Would he have taken his lumps in the same patient fashion as Dukakis? Who knows?

Would Dukakis have reacted differently in the second and climactic television debate with George Bush if he had not been worried about his wife? That was the debate in which Bernard Shaw asked the dreadful question: "Governor, if Kitty Dukakis were raped and murdered, would you favor an irrevocable death penalty for the killer?"

Mishandling that, by totally ignoring the emotional implications of the hypothetical situation, inflicted untold damage on Dukakis's chances. It gave millions of Americans reason to doubt his humanity. Never mind that Dukakis had awoke that day with a fever and severe laryngitis. Every candidate feels fluish or unwell at times during campaigns. But if Dukakis had not harbored private fears about his wife's well-being, would he have handled that question any better than this? "No, I don't, Bernard. And I think you know I've opposed the death penalty all during my life. I don't see any evidence that it's a deterrent, and I think there are better and more effective ways to deal with violent crime."

If you like him as a person, and as a politician, as I do, your answer is hopeful: of course he would have handled it better. Nobody will ever know. Now, it's water under the dam.

Measured by the prevailing standards of politics, the Dukakis saga is one of sadness and remorse. He lost the White House. His reputation for competence turned to ashes. His wife's travails shattered the tranquillity and privacy of his home life. His name became a vile epithet to thousands of voters who, taken at their word, actually *hate* him for what happened to the commonwealth on his watch.

Politicians who previously trailed in his wake like baby ducklings sneered at his mention and refused his phone calls. Legislators who made their first trip to the big time in campaigning for Dukakis in various primary states around the nation vied with one another to see who could denounce him in the most florid language. Some journalists who'd praised him in the most mawkish terms abruptly fell upon him at every opportunity.


And what were his sins? He stole no money. He corrupted no businessmen. He didn't sell out the state. His personal conduct remained above reproach. Did he sniff cocaine? Abuse women for his own lust? Commit any outrage to public decency or order? Install relatives in high and undeserved public places? Follow for any appreciable length the well-trodden Bay State path of cronyism? No, no, no, no, and no. Well, perhaps rigorous scrutiny on the last count may require a "maybe."

But Dukakis's stunning fall from grace was unaccompanied by any of the personal flaws we associate with such dramatic reversals. He didn't go to prison, like James Michael Curley. He didn't have close political associates clapped into the calaboose. He wasn't tarred in a sex scandal. He didn't steal, kill, or get caught catting around.

At every stage of his political life, sometimes in private, sometimes in public — as when he became governor, as when he declared for the presidency, as when he claimed his party's highest nomination — he'd repeated the Athenian pledge vowed in Greece two thousand years earlier: "We will never bring disgrace to this country by any act of dishonesty or cowardice. We will fight for the ideals of this, our country. We will revere and obey the law. We will strive to quicken our sense of civic duty. Thus, in all ways, we will transmit this country greater, stronger, prouder and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us."¹⁵

As he leaves the office he's held for twelve years, in bad times then good times, for briefly one great time, and at the end in the worst of times, Dukakis was adored by but a handful, praised by few, reviled by many. Measured by the Athenian oath, how does his record stack up? Did he bring disgrace to his state? If so, how? By losing the presidency? By sinking so low in opinion polls that no other governor fared as poorly? Was that the worst of it? Losing an election, and sinking low in the polls? That's all?

It takes me back to the night in New York's Astoria ballroom in the spring of 1988, when Dukakis, his wife, and her father, Harry Ellis Dickson, were mobbed by deliriously happy Greek-American supporters convinced they would one day dance in the White House. In the motorcade, riding away from the tumult, Dickson, associate conductor of the Boston Pops and a veteran of six decades in show biz, laughed about trying to enlist celebrities to the cause. "Danny Kaye was my friend for twenty-seven years. I tried to get him to do something for my son-in-law the governor, but he was afraid of politics. He'd say to me, 'Harry, stay away from politics. You'll get hurt.'"¹⁶

As the car hurtled through the rain under police escort, his daughter sucking on a cigarette, his son-in-law basking in the afterglow of the most riotous reception he'd ever received, Dickson chortled at the memory of Danny Kaye's caution. "Now look at us, right?"

Notes

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The Presidential Primary

A Faulty Process

Douglas A. Fraser and Irving Bluestone

The system of presidential primary elections has in effect created a nonsystem for selecting party candidates for the highest office in the nation. Personality has become the substitute for program content, and campaign spending coupled with the influence of the media counts for more than the candidates' experience, knowledge, expertise, administrative ability, and attachment to the policies and programs of their respective political party. In large measure the current presidential primary system has failed in its objective to advance the democratic process within the political parties while undermining the effectiveness of the parties and the importance of activists, the party regulars. It is altogether fair to allege that the democratic values we cherish as a nation are not being reinforced by the primary system. This article proposes that we reexamine the process for selecting each party's presidential candidate in search of a better way.

It is altogether timely to reexamine the primary election process in the selection of political party presidential candidates and to pose the question, Does the current presidential primary system truly represent the essence of democracy and its values, or is it a procedure that is claimed to be valid in theory but is actually defective in practice? Our judgment holds that it is, indeed, defective in practice. We must either design revisions and reforms that will make it a more effective and efficient system or perhaps find a substitute for it altogether.

The ostensible purpose of a primary election is to ensure that each party's candidate for president is selected by popular vote of the party's adherents among the citizenry at large. However, the election campaign, inevitably, emerges as a popularity contest among individuals rather than the selection of candidates based on a comprehensive examination by the voters of a broad range of salient socioeconomic issues. The contest tends to be more a matter of charismatic personality than of program content. It appears to be more a matter of which candidates can raise the most money for their respective campaign than it is the value of each individual's experience, knowledge, expertise, creative thinking, adminis-

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trative ability, and attachment to the policies and programs of his or her political party. And the influence of the media, particularly television, seems to accentuate the allure of the candidates' appearance far more than the substance of the issues they advocate. In some considerable measure, moreover, the primary referendum has tended to undermine the significance of the political party as the standard-bearer of its political platform and advocate in behalf of its committed members. Add to these distractions the extended duration of the presidential primary campaign, the strain and stress of demands on one's endurance on the campaign trail, the inequities of influence on the voters arising from the calendar of state primaries, the low state of voter participation, and the need for candidates already holding public office to neglect their duties during the long months of campaigning.

The question properly arises: Are the democratic values we cherish as a nation being reenforced by the use of the current system of presidential primaries or is it time to review the process, revise it, or even find an appropriate substitute that will correct its defects? Let us first examine the past record of facts and figures surrounding the presidential primary in order to highlight the arguments concerning its inadequacies.

The Money Problem

In a March 10, 1988, editorial, the *New York Times* commented on the result of the Super Tuesday, March 8, 1988, primary for presidential candidates with the caption "The Shock of Super Tuesday."¹ The Super Tuesday primary elections gained that title because of the large number of states which scheduled their primary election to be held on that one day. Why did the editorial describe the result as "shocking"?

Because it brought us face to face with the beast: a sudden quantum jump in the need for money. No disrespect for the candidates' other qualities, but please notice that those who had lots of money to spend, like Bush, Gore and Dukakis, won on Tuesday; those who didn't, like Dole and Gephardt, lost.

Well, that's right, but where's the shock? Everyone knows "money is the mother's milk of politics."

It is indeed rare that the candidate with the most money to spend during the primary campaign is the one who loses. It is rarer still that the candidate who has the least amount of money to spend is the one who wins, regardless of capability and qualifications to lead the nation.

The number of dollars collected and spent has reached proportions that probably require more time and effort during the campaign than do study and research of the key issues and preparation by the candidate and staff to define a vision for the nation's future well-being and formulate an action program to solve the nation's problems.

In the presidential primary campaign of 1983–1984, eleven candidates entered the race.² A total of \$105 million was collected, of which \$24.6 million were federal matching funds, and \$103.6 million were actually disbursed.³ It may be assumed that the rest of the money remained unexpended in that campaign. Since President Reagan was the only Republican Party candidate in the race, the outlay of \$25.9 million for his campaign was comparatively small. Obviously, had Reagan not been an incumbent and unchallenged, the expenditures would have been dramatically higher. For instance, in the 1979–1980 presidential primary campaign, there was a total of ten candidates, four for the Democratic Party and six for the Republican Party, and while the total outlay of campaign funds

amounted to \$92.3 million, the Republican candidates received \$56.7 million, more than double the \$25.9 million spent when Reagan ran unopposed.

The 1987–1988 presidential primary saw an explosion of spending in behalf of the candidates. As compared with the \$103.6 million disbursed in 1983–1984 and the \$92.3 million spent in 1979–1980, the net disbursements in the 1987–1988 race totaled \$250,361,270.⁴ This represents an increase of more than 100 percent in expenditures over the preceding presidential primary. One might speculate how much higher the figure will be in future such primaries. In other words, how high is up?

It is also of interest to note that the candidates who received the most in contributions and spent the most for the campaign in contested elections were the winners: Dukakis and Bush in 1987–1988 and Mondale in 1983–1984; Reagan and Carter in 1979–1980.

In a Senate race a William Proxmire, as an admittedly rare exception, may be the victor, yet not spend gobs of money in the campaign. It is extremely doubtful, even impossible, that a candidate without substantial financing would be able to make any kind of showing, let alone win, in a presidential primary contest.

It is evident that money talks and is heard. Does it also mean that the most qualified, capable, and experienced is selected? Good question.

The Voter Turnout Problem

The United States has become infamous among industrial democracies for its low voter participation, both in the so-called off-year elections and in presidential election years as well. In the 1960 presidential election, 62.8 percent of the voting-age population went to the polls; that year stands as the high-water mark of voter turnout over the past thirty years. Thereafter, a rather steady decline has taken place (except for a minimal upturn of one-half a percentage point to 53.1 percent in 1984) so that in the 1988 election participation fell to a low of 50.2 percent. George Bush was elected president by 53.4 percent of those who went to the polls. He received 48.8 million votes — a mere 26.8 percent of the 182.6 million total number of eligible voters. And this election was for the presidency, not just to choose a candidate for the office!

Voter participation in the presidential primaries is, of course, considerably lower than that in the presidential election itself. In the 1988 primaries, not a single state came anywhere near a 50 percent total turnout. In fact Montana, with 35.5 percent of its eligible voters going to the polls, enjoyed the highest voter turnout. In most of the states that held a primary, the voter turnout was below 30 percent; in Rhode Island it was a bare 8.5 percent.⁵

Thus, in a primary with five or six contestants, a candidate may garner sufficient convention votes to win the presidential nomination yet his or her actual vote from among the eligible citizens may represent a minuscule percentage of the voting-age population who support his or her party. Consider, for example, that in 1988 Rhode Island had 764,000 eligible voters for the primary election. Only 16,000 participated in the Republican primary, representing 2.1 percent of the voting-age population. This may be democracy in theory, but there must be a better way to make it more meaningful.

It is of more than passing interest to note that the steady decline in the percentage of eligible voters who actually exercise their franchise in *presidential* elections coincides with the proliferation of presidential *primary* elections. It may not be possible objectively to attribute this phenomenon to the increase in the use of primaries to select nominees for the presidency. It would appear, however, that the almost permanent presidential campaigning with its constant beat of media coverage generates more voter apathy than it

does voter participation. Perhaps the voters are so weary of such uninterrupted primary campaigning that they are “turned off” by what they rapidly come to consider a more or less vapid performance. No less a political guru than Lee Atwater, the brain behind the 1988 Bush campaign, expressed the opinion that many voters simply “don’t feel that voting is a rational use of their time.”

The Crossover Problem

Another factor that compounds the problem of choosing a party’s candidate in a primary is the “crossover” vote. It is possible for supporters of the Republican Party to vote in the Democratic Party primary, and vice versa. Thus, it is not mere speculation to project a situation in which adherents of one party pose as supporters of the opposing party in the primary and cast ballots for an admittedly weak candidate in an effort to thwart the campaign of a strong one. Such a deliberate action has the earmarks of a “dirty tricks” campaign, but dirty tricks are certainly not outside the pale of political morality. Just consider the nature of some recent campaign tactics.

Yet another area of concern might be considered. Apparently nothing prevents anyone from running for office as a Democrat or a Republican — or as an independent. All that is necessary is to declare one’s candidacy and enter the primary of either party. One would expect that the sincerity of declared party adherence might be subject to scrutiny by the party itself. In the 1990 Massachusetts primary election, John Silber, who admitted to having voted for Ronald Reagan in 1980 and 1984 and for George Bush in 1988, was the winning candidate for governor in the Democratic Party primary. There are strong indications that his victory was attributable to voters who registered as independents but cast Democratic ballots for Silber in the primary election. It therefore appears that the adherents to the Democratic Party did not determine who would be the standard-bearer for their own political party.

Or consider the senatorial candidate in Louisiana, David Duke, the former Ku Klux Klan leader. It is scandalous that he ran as a Republican even though GOP officials disavowed him and his campaign, which was strikingly, unabashedly, and explicitly racist. Should there be a procedure that enables the official political party to exercise some measure of control in determining the eligibility of a potential candidate? Should a person whose pronouncements and stated positions are diametrically opposed to the principles, policies, and programs of the party he or she wishes to represent be prevented from entering a primary race? In all fairness, should not those who are registered as supporters of their chosen party decide who should be the candidate of their party? It is perhaps easier to raise the questions than to determine the answers. The questions themselves, however, are certainly pertinent.

The Calendar Problem

For some years political scientists, officials of the two major parties, and elected officials have been mulling over developments related to the scheduling of primaries in the various states. The early timing of primary voting in Iowa and New Hampshire has been a matter of considerable debate. Although these are comparatively small states in terms of population (and their people are not demographically typical of the broad culture of the nation as a whole), their scheduled primaries appear to have carried lopsided weight in influencing subsequent primary elections in other states. Thus, the winners in these two states have a

psychological advantage as the campaign presses on into other areas of the nation. It is a reflection of the advantage attached to being a winner without necessarily evaluating the significance or lack of significance of these early contests within the context of the national scene of all the fifty states. New Hampshire sends only eighteen delegates to the Democratic Party national convention. For the candidates, the importance of that primary rests mainly on the opportunity to gain national publicity. It helps to win these delegates, but they are a tiny fraction of the several thousand who attend the convention.

In 1984, and even more notably in 1988, with a view toward pressing the full weight of the southern region of the nation onto the selection of candidates, the southern and border states agreed to schedule their primaries on the same day chosen by six states outside the South, creating Super Tuesday. The purpose, ostensibly, was to consolidate the South's voting strength and diminish the influence of the Iowa and New Hampshire primaries.

Holding a multiple-state primary on one day makes it virtually impossible for candidates personally to cover all the areas in the short period of time allotted. Under the strain and stress of campaigning, how can any candidate possibly visit twenty states on a hop, skip, and jump basis to bring his or her message to the electorate? Reliance on TV commercials and newspaper advertisements, therefore, becomes the substitute for in-person, hands-on appearances. Money again becomes the key. In any event, prospective voters receive a fleeting thirty-second TV commercial that carries little of substance and relies perceptibly on unadorned deception to influence the audience.

On the one hand, then, is the issue of undue influence generated by a couple of early primaries. On the other is the problem of a simultaneous date for several primaries that makes personal campaigning impossible. The pros and cons of the debate over scheduling of primaries remain a hot issue. Should the primaries be staggered over a longer period of time? Should one day be singled out for a super national primary? The discussion continues, with no finite answer in sight.

The Media Problem

How much or how little influence the media have on the voters' selection of a presidential candidate has been a subject of considerable interest to political scientists, politicians, and the media themselves. On one side are those who insist that the election results prove that media hype for an early front-runner in the primary elections has negligible effect on the ultimate choice of the candidates. An examination of Ted Kennedy's defeat by Jimmy Carter in 1980 and Ronald Reagan's victory over George Bush after Bush's early Iowa win have been cited, as has the poor showing of John Glenn in 1984 despite a heavy barrage of early favorable media coverage.⁶ The other side of the argument is that the media dominate and fashion the character of the campaign. So it is not unusual to find this conclusion from a research study of the subject:

In the absence of strong party machines that inform and mobilize the electorate, the news media have become increasingly important in the prenomination phase of the presidential selection process. From one perspective — applying the criteria of newsworthiness to large, multicandidate fields — it can be argued that they are now the essential institutional force in the process. Through both the quantity and the quality of press coverage the candidates receive, critical judgments are fashioned by political elites, likely voters, and other less active members of the electorate. These include decisions about contributing time and money as well as about whether to vote and for whom.⁷

In fact, it is argued that candidates will increasingly cater to the needs of the media, recognizing the overriding importance of utilizing them to further campaigns. Thus:

Candidates who understand the ways of the press and the institutional and personal needs of media professionals can increase the probability of receiving coverage by facilitating the job of reporters. Implementation of such a strategy frequently depends on the campaign's ability to organize and schedule activities to fit the deadlines of the press. This is increasingly done with an eye toward the production needs or demands of the evening news, and it frequently includes production of "pseudo-events" or "medialities." This means attempting to schedule major events no later than lunch or early afternoon, arranging for good crowds, and distributing prepared copies of the text, if there is one, in advance. For television, it means arranging a setting with appropriate visuals that will generate videotape with good pictures that can be used on the air.⁸

In this modern age of telecommunication, the TV screen "has become the central medium of communication in modern politics" and even facial expressions and postural habits of the candidates as their image comes on screen influence viewers' attitudes and opinions.⁹ Little surprise, therefore, that the public relations and communications experts have come to play an increasingly dominant role in fashioning the candidates' campaigns. Issues per se tend to receive less attention than the candidates' expressive displays, carefully rehearsed in advance of TV appearances.

Willy-nilly, the media, in print, and even more so in TV, play a notable role in the election process, but that role has less to do with the major issues on the national and international scene than with the thirty-second-spot portrayal of personality and the cleverly manipulated use of the media by the candidate. The political party, its policies and program, the party leaders, and the party activists have a diminishing role in the final choice of the presidential candidate, the potential standard-bearer for the party. Put more bluntly, as one observer of the primary election process concluded, "The problem is that television created a process that has weakened the parties and created one of the least well-organized systems for choosing party leaders in the world."¹⁰

The Wear-and-Tear Problem

It is a wonder that a presidential candidate who campaigns from the beginning of the contest for nomination and sticks it out to the final decision does not collapse from exhaustion. No other nation in the world in which democratic and contested elections are held makes the stamina demands upon the candidates that the United States does. For almost two years — and in some cases longer — the candidate is on the run, rushing from one geographic location to another, meeting with staff, meeting with small groups of the politically or financially powerful, appearing before audiences of supporters, shaking hands, engaging in the proverbial kissing of babies, fencing with the press, and looking fresh and engaging for the news and television cameras. Grabbing a sandwich or a brief nap while on the run between appearances is common practice, in the tradition of Harry Truman, whose advice was never to pass up a "facility" because one never knows when the next one will be available.

Most presidential primary candidates already hold elective office. The demands of campaigning make it difficult — almost impossible — to perform one's functions and

fulfill one's responsibilities as a "job holder" while pursuing the campaign trail. There is no leave of absence with or without pay for a senator or a member of Congress or a governor. A governor is still responsible for governing and should not neglect his or her ongoing duties. A senator or congressman should still serve actively on congressional committees, study the bills to be voted on, and be present to cast a vote. The balancing act between trying to win the nomination for president and resisting neglect of their job functions places further strain on an already taut string. One need only reflect on the problems that Governor Dukakis and the citizens of Massachusetts have faced since the November 1988 election to realize how difficult it is to manage an extended presidential primary campaign and a governor's duties simultaneously.

Such months-long campaigning is a grueling exercise that, often enough, leads to the use of a quick quip rather than intensive presentation of salient issues. And the stretched-out primary process is only the beginning for the candidate who captures the nomination at the party's national convention. After an all too brief rest comes preparation for TV debates and the fifty-state rush-rush pace of the presidential campaign itself. When one considers the strains and stresses of extended campaigning on the candidate, the family, and the staff, compounded by the humiliating need constantly to beg for money to finance the operation, it is little wonder that otherwise viable, even outstanding, candidates are inhibited from taking the plunge. And little wonder that, for those who do make the run, "Read my lips" becomes the campaign substitute for a careful, studied exposition of the issues and solutions to the nation's problems! Dreaming up gimmickry and calling up charisma are all too often becoming the essence of presidential campaigning.

Is There a Satisfactory Answer?

Inherent in the debate concerning the presidential primary election system lies the fundamental issue of democracy and democratic values. Until the end of the nineteenth century the national party conventions comprised delegates selected directly by state party leaders or by activists voting in state party caucuses. The reaction to "boss control" of the process, which entered internal party procedures in the early years of the twentieth century, led to the introduction of state primaries. In fact, in 1916 both the national Democratic and Republican parties used the primary in twenty states to select delegates to their respective national conventions. It was not long, however, before the use of the presidential primary fell into disrepute and the caucus method was essentially reinstated.

The upheaval of the 1960s, and particularly the debacle of the 1968 Democratic national convention in Chicago, saw the rise of internal party reform movements. The primary election process inherited new vigor with the cry of democracy and direct participation aimed at wresting party control from "party bosses." Today only sixteen states, plus Washington, D.C., do not hold presidential primaries. However, just as the primary election process again came under review in the 1920s, so today is soul-searching taking place concerning the current system of presidential primaries.

The basic issue remains: Is the present presidential primary system fulfilling its promise of true political democracy or has it simply become a "nonsystem"? Should the parties revert to the preprimary election system for selecting delegates to their respective national conventions? Or should they put in place carefully directed reforms of the present system aimed at correcting deficiencies and ensuring the protection of democratic values within our free society?

The Role of Activists in National Party Conventions

Throughout the nation as a whole, tens of thousands of rank-and-file citizens are activists within their respective parties. They attend party meetings in their communities, pay dues to help maintain party apparatus, become precinct delegates, perform volunteer duties in party offices, involve themselves in congressional district races, and so forth. There is every reason for them to play a meaningful role in the selection of their party's candidate for president. In the present primary selection system, however, that role, while not totally obliterated, is largely devitalized. Inevitably this leads to a weakening of the party apparatus and the decline of the party as a political force.

Yet the candidate who wins the nomination through the primary process runs under the banner of his or her party. The reaction in past years to party "bossism," with a handful of powerful leaders within the party ruling the roost in selecting presidential candidates in the confines of the traditional smoke-filled room, was aimed at democratizing the process. As some critics have noted, the result has become a nonsystem. And it has tended to eviscerate the influence of the broad base of regulars whose devotion to its principles is evidenced by their consistent involvement in the ongoing activities of the party of their choice.

A political party, after all, should be comprised of political activists rallying around common policy goals. It should be representative of a strong association of people whose combined commitment and force are aimed at convincing the electorate at large that their cause is just and deserves the support of the voters.

Why not, then, create a presidential nominating system that reflects the significant contribution of party activists and provides them with the opportunity to select their leader? After all, they are better acquainted with the qualities and capabilities of prospective candidates. They represent, by and large, the core of party support and influence party policy. There is no reason why a process should not be established that would avoid authoritarian total party boss control and recognize the democratizing value of the broad-based rank-and-file activist role in choosing the party's presidential nominee. Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, and Lyndon Johnson were the nominees — and ultimately the successful candidates — for their respective parties. And their selection was, in the greatest measure, the decision by party activists in open convention.

The deficiencies in the current system of presidential primaries appear increasingly obvious. It is desirable, even necessary, therefore, to effect a deserved major role for party activists with an appropriate voting opportunity of the electorate in the ultimate selection of the respective party's presidential nominee at each party's national convention.

This is not to advocate a reversion to pure party bossism. It is to say, however, that a fitting substitute for a disjointed primary presidential election system would be a carefully designed process to ensure the democratizing input in the nominee selection procedure by those whose serious and consistent attachment to the party of their choice earns for them the status of knowledgeable delegates to their party's national convention. The fulfillment of democracy rests upon the implementation of democratic processes. It is not undemocratic to establish a system of decision making in which those who have devoted their time, energy, and active participation in the affairs of their chosen political party attend the "caucus" — the national convention — in which, after due and ample debate, their vote designates their representative.

This requires a process which assures that such party adherents become convention delegates with voting rights. An appropriate process to achieve this goal becomes readily apparent. The practice of electing precinct captains within the two major political parties is one of long standing. It affords the opportunity for those who wish to represent their chosen party to solicit the votes of the citizens in their precinct who are registered in their respective party to become the party's representatives at the neighborhood level of the thousands of the nation's apportioned precincts.

These precinct delegates, the grassroots activists, comprise the core of each party's congressional district meetings. It is altogether reasonable that this group select the people to represent their congressional district at the party's national convention. Moreover, at each of the party's state conventions the same group would confirm the congressional district selections of national convention delegates and select a designated number of at-large delegates. These latter would be chosen from among the state party leaders and the party's elected public officials. It is of course a given that the members of the national committee of the party and members of Congress would also be confirmed as delegates. The number of delegates to the national convention from each state would be apportioned on the basis of the census population in the state. Thus, the voting strength of each state at the convention would reflect the precise proportion of its population to the total population of the nation.

These delegates, because of their interest and involvement in their party's affairs and the time, energy, and commitment they devote to party activities, are in a position to assess the qualifications of possible presidential candidates and to evaluate the likely chances of each potential nominee to win the election.

It stands to reason that such a selection process would gain the advantage for each party of more or less guaranteeing that the chosen candidate is carefully scrutinized as to qualities of required leadership appropriately reflecting the policies and programs of the party. The choice by the voting public is, as a consequence, far more apt to be based on an assessment of the nominees' stand on the key national and international issues than on catch phrases and negative election campaigning.

There is still, however, the question of the self-starter who "catches fire" prior to the nominating convention itself. A convention that totally ignores such a new political star does so at its and its party's peril. Assuredly, an individual who is affiliated with a party and wishes to be considered for the presidential nomination, whether well known or a veritable newcomer, should have the opportunity to "sell" his or her "wares," so to speak, and attempt to prove that he or she can generate the support needed to win. This was the case in 1960, when John F. Kennedy swept the presidential primary in West Virginia and ran in the other fifteen primaries held that year. He captured the imagination of the voters, overcame what many considered a drawback in the national political scene, his Catholicism, and lit the torch that carried him to his party's nomination and his election to the presidency.

To prevent foreclosure of such a possibility and to cause serious consideration to be given to such a candidate, it would be reasonable to retain the primary election but to adjust it so as to minimize to the greatest degree the faults and failings of the current system. It might be sensible for each party to schedule a limited number of state primaries — perhaps ten in all — determined to be generally representative of the various geographic and demographic sectors of the nation. There would have to be severe time constraints on the primary election schedule effectively to avoid the drawn-out, exhausting process.

Moreover, in each succeeding presidential election year a different grouping of states would be designated to comprise the primary population so that the results of early primaries would not unduly or unfairly influence the outcome in other states.

Some candidates may, at their own risk, decide not to enter the primaries. They would nevertheless be entitled to seek their party's nomination. Recall, for instance, the success of Adlai Stevenson in 1952 and 1956. Even though Estes Kefauver won the primaries, which Stevenson chose not to enter, the Democratic convention delegates selected Stevenson as their nominee, convinced that his were the superior qualifications.

With a combination of activist delegates selected from within the party structure and delegates reflecting the results of a limited number of primaries, all the prospective candidates would have a chance to air their views, a dark horse candidate would have his or her moment in the spotlight, and the candidate of choice would be one whose carefully weighed credentials make that person a potential winner for the party.

Political Party Rules

There is every reason for the political parties, within the confines of their structure and responsive to their policies, to establish rules, regulations, and procedures governing the campaigns undertaken by their respective candidates. For example, rules might be established concerning "dirty tricks" campaigning, with the precautionary note that candidates who violate those rules will be publicly chastised by party officials. More precisely, all thirty-second TV commercials would require the candidate in whose behalf the message is delivered to take full responsibility for its content by either personally introducing it or confirming it at the close.

It certainly would be helpful for the media to publicize untruths or falsifications by or in behalf of any candidate. It may not be feasible to compel the media to present such analyses, but sound reporting surely calls for objective, factual correction of false statements or innuendo. The Willie Horton commercials of the 1988 Bush campaign come readily to mind.

It would also be necessary to guard against the "crossover" vote in any primary. It is fair and fitting that only those registered as Republicans be permitted to vote in the Republican Party primary and only those registered as Democrats to vote in the Democratic Party primary. It would be altogether fitting if a national law were enacted requiring the declaration of political party preference as a prerequisite to vote in a particular primary. After all, the primary is the business of the political party, and its results should reflect the will only of those who are declared party supporters. A Michigan law enacted in 1988 required voters in that state to declare a party preference in order to be eligible to vote in the presidential primary. Its admitted purpose was to prevent the crossover vote. In May 1990 a circuit court judge declared that the law was a violation of the state constitution. The basis for the decision was that the law violated the provision requiring only state residency as a license to vote. Surely it makes eminent good sense that only those who are declared adherents of a particular party be eligible to vote in the party's primary. In fact, in a 1981 Wisconsin case, the court held that each political party has the right to decide how delegates to its national nominating convention are selected.¹¹

The thesis presented here is to give preference to a system in which party activists have the major role in selecting the nominee in national party conventions yet not totally abandoning the role of a limited number of primary elections in providing the opening for a

self-starter to prove his or her electability. There is much to be argued in favor of having those most committed to and knowledgeable concerning the party and its possible presidential candidates as the decision makers. Admittedly, times and circumstances may make this change difficult to achieve, for the transition from the current presidential primary election process would not be easy. It is urgent, nonetheless, that party activists and the parties themselves play the vital and weighty role in the nominee selection process. After all, it is they who have devoted the time, effort, energy, and financial investment to keep their organizations healthy and vibrant. Perhaps it is stretching a point, but if only shareholders may vote to determine the management of corporate enterprises, why should not the stakeholder activists in political parties have the significant and influential voice in selecting their presidential nominees?

The approach advocated does not entirely lay to rest some of the problems troubling the current system, such as undue media influence. It does, however, argue for sharp change in the current nonsystem of the presidential primary election process. The time is ripe. The will to change must be strongly nurtured so that a more rational system can become a reality. 🐼

Notes

1. "The Shock of Super Tuesday," *New York Times*, March 10, 1988, A-30.
2. The candidates in the 1983–1984 presidential primary race were, for the Democratic Party, Reubin Askew, Alan Cranston, John Glenn, Gary Hart, Ernest Hollings, Jesse Jackson, Lyndon La Rouché, George McGovern, Walter Mondale; for the Republican Party, Ronald Reagan; for the Citizens Party, Sonia Johnson.
3. *Statistical Abstract of the U.S.*, 1989, 109th ed., 262.
4. Federal Election Commission, press release, August 25, 1989.
5. See note 3 above, 258.
6. Cited in "Politics-Rules Seem Made to Be Rewritten," *New York Times*, May 3, 1985.
7. Alfred B. Hunt, "The Media and Presidential Campaigns," in *Elections American Style*, ed. A. James Reichley (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1987), chapter 3.
8. Michael W. Traugott, "The Media and the Nominating Process," in *Before Nomination: Our Primary Problem*, ed. George Grassmuck, American Enterprise, 1985, 112.
9. *Ibid.*, 104–105.
10. Roger Masters and Denis G. Sullivan, "Voters Take Cues from Leaders' Facial Expressions on TV," in *Public Affairs Report of the Institute of Governmental Studies, University of California at Berkeley* 31, no. 2 (March 1990).
11. *Democratic Party of the U.S. vs. State of Wisconsin* 450 U.S. 107, 1081.

On Being a Republican in Massachusetts

Notes of a Party Chairman

Andrew Natsios

In the 1970s the Democratic and Republican national and state parties initiated efforts at party renewal in order to reverse their declining institutional power. Between 1980 and 1987 the Massachusetts Republican Party undertook a renewal effort modeled after that of the Republican National Committee under William Brock. This model emphasized the provision to candidates and to the grassroots party organization of campaign services such as literature design, polling, direct mail fund-raising, telephone banks, and campaign schools. The Massachusetts Republican Party concentrated these services to candidates for the state legislature, achieving the largest net gain in seats since 1962. Campaign technology as a party renewal strategy has inherent limits, which may now have been reached; further progress may require changes in the ideology and image of the state party.

Certainly one of the most significant trends in the American political system over the past several decades has been the virtual collapse of American political parties as institutions of governance, which has produced several unanticipated consequences that have weakened the political system. The cost of campaigns has increased dramatically at both the state and national level as the media-intensive direct primary has replaced the party nominating convention as the principal mechanism for choosing candidates for office. When they were functional, parties served both as institutional mechanisms for aggregating interest groups in American society so they could influence public policy and as a screen to protect policymakers from the corrupting influences of interest-group politics. Now interest groups influence government directly, with the attendant problems of influence peddling, the corrupting influence of their campaign contributions going directly to candidates, and incoherent national policy as the interest groups encourage congressional committees and executive branch agencies to make policy decisions even if those policies are contradictory from one agency or law to another.

The parties acted as the primary medium through which candidates and officeholders communicated with the public, a role the mass media have taken for themselves, and for

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which they are suited. A strong case could be made that declining voter participation, greater public cynicism of political figures, and the instability of governing coalitions are a function of the unsuitability of the media as a mechanism for this sort of communication.

Political parties are important institutions in democracies; when they fail, democracy is weakened and the authority of government is diminished. The political parties, or what was left of them when their authority reached its lowest point in the late 1960s and 1970s, began to consider measures to renew themselves. This article examines the efforts at renewal in the Republican Party in Massachusetts between 1980 and 1986, the result of those efforts, and the prospects for the party in the 1990 elections. As Massachusetts Republican Party Chairman from 1980 to 1987, I directed this attempt at party renewal, so I write as a practitioner.

History

Republicans in Massachusetts, who had long relied on the formal party organization to win elections, had the singular misfortune of having their party decline institutionally at the same time they began to lose their hold on political power in the state because of historical changes beyond the party's control. The rise of the Democratic Party in Massachusetts had little to do with its formal party structure, which was weak, ineffective, and at constant war within itself. The Democrats more resembled a mosaic of feudal fiefdoms than an organized party, but they nevertheless began to win elections beginning in the late 1940s, finally, under Michael Dukakis, taking complete control of state government in the mid-1970s. Because the structure of the Republican Party was central to its electoral successes in the era when it was in power, the decline of the party institutionally was more catastrophic to it than any organizational weakness the Democrats may have suffered as both parties declined institutionally.

For nearly eighty years, from the Civil War until 1948, Massachusetts was a bastion of Yankee Republicanism. For most of this time the Republican Party held majorities in both houses of the legislature and elected both U.S. senators and the majority of the congressional delegation. The Democrats succeeded, beginning in the 1930s, to win the governorship with greater frequency and occasionally a U.S. Senate seat when they nominated a lace-curtain Irishman from outside Boston, like David Walsh, to run for that office. These exceptions proved the rule of Republican predominance.

In the nineteenth century the Republicans' control reflected more than anything the simple demographic truth that swamp and Brahmin Yankees were more numerous than the immigrant Irish.¹ By 1920 two thirds of the population of the state was foreign born or the children of immigrants, and the Yankees could no longer count on numerical superiority to win elections.² In 1924 the party reached a turning point when control over the state organization, in a celebrated and bitter struggle, passed from the elder Henry Cabot Lodge to a new generation of Yankee politicians led by Calvin Coolidge.³ Republican Party leaders sought to stem the tide of growing immigrant power reflected in the resurgent Democratic Party through several strategies after their poor showing in 1928–1932. First, they centralized political power in the party in the Republican State Committee and made it into an effective political organization designed to protect the existing arrangement of power in the state. Second, they systematically attempted to assimilate some of the newer immigrant groups (French, Italians, Jews, and Poles) into the party, a task made easier by the refusal of the Irish, who increasingly dominated the Democratic Party, to allow any measure of participation by Catholics from eastern and southern Europe,

blacks, or Jews. Finally, the party espoused moderate social and economic reform to appeal to disadvantaged ethnic groups.⁴

The Democrats did their part to make the Republican strategy succeed by inept and parochial leadership and brutal factional infighting. The Democrats should have taken over the state just after World War I, as demographic changes moved rapidly in their favor. Instead, not until 1954 did the Republican Party finally lose control of the state House of Representatives, and 1958 of the state Senate. Republican candidates continued to win the governorship frequently until 1974, when Francis Sargent was defeated, and at least one U.S. Senate seat until 1978, when Edward Brooke lost.

The Republican Party organization was an extraordinary edifice to behold in the earlier years. Each town had an elected committee of between twenty and thirty-five members, with ward committees in the cities serving a parallel function. The work of the committee was carefully planned and organized by an extensive state party staff. We found in old Republican State Committee files fund-raising manuals designed for 1936, which would be regarded as state-of-the-art fund-raising by present-day standards.⁵ Each town committee had a quota to raise by knocking on the doors of every Republican in town once a year. The proceeds were sent to the state committee. I can recall this system in practice in the 1960s in my hometown, Holliston, where I, a teenager, was assigned a route to complete. The Republican town committees, until the 1960s, ran the campaigns of Republican candidates from president to state representative. Patronage from Republican governors was distributed through and by the local party organization until John Volpe, realizing that the base of the party was declining, sought to expand his own base by distributing patronage outside the party to Democrats and independents who had supported him for governor. Republican Party platforms prior to the 1960s were serious documents that successful candidates were expected to implement after the election. Party workers aspired to the chairmanship of a town or ward committee, which was a sought-after position.

From 1953 to 1974 the local Republican Party organization played a major role in nominating candidates for statewide office at state nominating conventions. The Republican delegates to these conclaves were chosen by the town and ward committees, and the delegates were almost always members of the local committees. Well into the late 1970s, the party's slate of candidates resembled a domestic UN — the Yankees had gradually agreed to share power with ethnic Republicans and the party's ticket reflected this changed constituency. With few exceptions, those who were nominated at the Republican state conventions were also successful in the statewide primaries in September of each election year. The Democrats were less successful at keeping up party discipline after these conventions, so that many convention choices were defeated in the Democratic primaries. The bitterness and factionalism of the fights contributed to the Democratic losses for statewide office. A Democratic legislature abolished these conventions in 1973. Only recently have they been revived by the Democrats.

In a word, the old Republican organizational structure had critical tasks to perform: candidate selection, campaign organization, fund-raising, patronage distribution, and platform writing.

The increasing mobility of American society made it more difficult to maintain a stable Republican Party structure, since new residents require socialization in a community before they get involved in politics. The dramatic increase in the number of working women meant that one of the major sources of Republican volunteer help, women, would be occupied with their own careers rather than working in political campaigns. The Massachusetts Federation of Republican Women, which once had chapters in almost every

city and large town, is now reduced to fourteen chapters of twelve hundred older women (with the exception of the Boston club and a few suburban clubs that younger women join).

These historic trends coincided, in 1969, with local political events that accelerated the collapse of the old Massachusetts Republican Party apparatus. Early that year Governor John Volpe became secretary of transportation in the Nixon administration. Frank Sargent, a patrician Yankee who had had a distinguished career in state service before being elected lieutenant governor in 1966, ascended to the governor's chair. Sargent and his advisers, in assessing the declining fortunes of the Republican Party in the commonwealth, decided the local party organization was more trouble than it was help and consequently put distance between the governor's office and the party. The distance grew to dislike as Sargent appointed more and more Democrats to his staff, to judgeships, and to the state bureaucracy. After his election in 1970 the governor began a gradual move to the left ideologically, presumably to co-opt any Democratic candidate for governor from attacking from a more liberal platform. In the process not only were the party conservatives, a growing force in the organization, alienated from the Sargent administration, but so were the business community and the moderate wing of the party. By the early 1970s the Republican Party was engaged in a destructive civil war.

While the party had been in genteel decay for two decades as a result of inexorable changes in the state, it was the Sargent administration that rendered the final blow to the creaking organization. Sargent maintained control of the state committee through his hand-picked state chairmen, each of whom served brief but destructive terms between 1969 and 1972 and left the party in shambles. The collapse of the fund-raising capacity of the state committee took income from \$495,000 in 1968 to \$50,000 in 1972 with a \$90,000 debt. The once powerful staff was reduced to one secretary, Peg Kelly, a career party worker who had been with the state committee for twenty-five years; everyone else was laid off. The number of Republican town and ward committee members declined from fourteen thousand in 1968 to seven thousand in 1972. The statistics only confirmed what was happening to the party at the state level.⁶

One of Sargent's party chairmen told me that he was given orders by the governor to shut down the fund-raising operation of the state party because it was competing with his own fund-raising. As a Sargent loyalist, the chairman obediently carried out the instruction. One of Sargent's senior staff advisers told me the crux of the governor's motivation for rendering the final blow to the party: he feared it would become an organizing center for conservative opposition to his administration and more particularly to his reelection campaign. His fear was shortly confirmed.

The conservative wing assessed the damage to the party and began an effort to wrest control of the state committee from Sargent in the spring of 1972. The anti-Sargent slate won across the state. The new state committee elected as its chairman Otto Wahlrab, a local party organizer, who with the help of Ann Witherbee, a moderate Republican and the party's new finance chairman, spent his time restoring morale among what remained of the party workers and paying off the party debt.

The conservative insurgency in the party led to a formal challenge to Sargent in the 1974 gubernatorial election by Carroll Sheehan, a strong conservative and former member of the Sargent administration who had become disgusted by Sargent's liberalism. While the challenge was unsuccessful (36 percent for Sheehan, 64 percent for Sargent), it did focus opposition to the administration. In the general election, Sargent was defeated by Michael Dukakis, a Democrat who ran on a conservative no-new-taxes platform. Exit

polls indicated that Sargent received only 55 percent of the Republican vote in the general election, with Dukakis receiving 45 percent. Sargent took 44 percent and Dukakis 56 percent of the total two-party vote for governor.

While the declining fortunes of the Republican Party in Massachusetts were confirmed by Sargent's defeat in 1974, the victory of Michael Dukakis was more ominous for the GOP than any party leader then realized. Dukakis's election marked a critical turning point for the Democratic as well as the Republican Party. In one election he engineered three critical changes in the image of his party: he had wrested control from the Irish, who had controlled its fortunes since the 1920s; he had increased the base of the party by capturing the loyalty of the white-collar, professional, and technocratic managerial class, which though independent had frequently voted Republican for governor; and he made the Democratic Party the primary conduit for the reform instinct in the Massachusetts electorate. Before 1974 the Republican Party was the only party that "respectable" people interested in good government could in conscience vote for; the Democratic Party's image as an urban party of followers of James Michael Curley had made it an inhospitable place for those interested in government reform.

Immediately following the election, an emergency meeting of the State Republican Committee was held to censure and remove the chairman, Bill Barnstead, Wahlrab's conservative successor. Barnstead had announced publicly in the middle of the gubernatorial campaign that he could not vote for Sargent, an act of disloyalty that could not be tolerated by even the conservatives on the committee, who joined the ouster move. A special search committee, under the direction of the one remaining Republican holding statewide office, Senator Edward Brooke, chose John Winthrop Sears, a patrician's patrician. A direct lineal descendant of the first governor of the state, Sears had held office as a state representative from Beacon Hill in Boston, Suffolk County sheriff, and commissioner, under Sargent, of the Metropolitan District Commission. (Sears later became the first Republican in decades to be elected to the Boston City Council.) Sears, a Harvard graduate and Rhodes Scholar, was to hold office for only a year because a new effort to control the state committee was being undertaken by Gordon Nelson. Nelson had founded a group called REGRO, Republicans for a Grassroots Organization, which was simply a cover for Nelson's ambitions to be state committee chairman. Sears realized what was happening too late, and Nelson's slate of candidates for state committee won a bare plurality that, with one of the other factions on the committee, was sufficient to elect him chairman in the spring of 1976. (The man he defeated by one vote, Andrew Card, now serves as deputy chief of staff to President Bush.)

Gordon Nelson, the man I removed as chairman four years later, was a unique character in the party organization who had begun as a campaign worker for Barry Goldwater in 1964. A Harvard graduate and a commodities broker by profession, Nelson was the first Jew to be elected chairman of the Republican Party in Massachusetts. He possessed an extraordinary amount of raw energy, a bright but exceedingly rigid mind, and a powerful personality that some found overbearing and abrasive. Nelson styled himself a movement conservative, a member of a national network of zealous conservative ideologues devoted to the establishment of a conservative party in the United States within the structure of the Republican Party — or outside, if necessary.

When Nelson began his term as chairman, he believed he could fashion the state Republican Party into an exclusively conservative party that would go on to win elections by virtue of its ideology. The strategy for this conversion was to be an alliance with conservative, ethnic Democrats, who, he thought, would feel more at home in a conservative Re-

publican Party than a liberal Democratic one. Nelson set about rebuilding the party with what he called Project Precinct, a door-to-door effort by the existing party structure in each city and town to recruit new workers to the local committees. The idea was neither novel nor unreasonable. Other states with strong party organizations regularly conducted much the same sort of drive. Decades earlier, the Republican Party in Massachusetts had accomplished a similar end in its door-to-door fund-raising efforts. The project was an unmitigated disaster in that virtually no one participated. It contained one major conceptual flaw: the Republican organization across the state had become so weak that it was incapable in most areas, and unwilling in the rest, of knocking on any doors. One cannot rebuild something from nothing with nonexistent workers. When the Republican generals called their troops to battle, no one reported for duty. Time, along with the continuing ideological war in the party and the neglect of Republican officeholders who should have known better, had done its work on the grassroots organization.

After some effort Nelson gave up trying to reconstruct the Massachusetts party and concentrated on presidential politics from a decidedly conservative perspective. Massachusetts, which had a large bloc of delegates to the national conventions every four years, could be important in nominating a conservative presidential candidate. Thus, he became involved in Ronald Reagan's campaign for president in 1976 and Philip Crane's presidential campaign in 1980. (Nelson reportedly had made a deal with Crane that he would become chairman of the Republican National Committee if Crane were elected president.) He became one of William Brock's (RNC chairman 1977–1980) most tenacious adversaries with his band of movement conservatives on the RNC from other areas of the country. Where Brock emphasized technological innovation for the national party, Nelson called for an ideological crusade.

While these events unfolded in Massachusetts, a quiet revolution was under way at the Republican National Committee in which Bill Brock, the party chairman, began an extraordinary effort at party renewal. He reasoned that American political parties were in transition, not in decline, as many scholars had been arguing. A new party system taking shape would add a critical new role in the political system for parties.

Political parties had become largely irrelevant to modern American politics, their primary functions being shifted to other institutions. Brock's innovations at the national Republican Party were consistent with the changing technology of politics. He transformed the Republican National Committee into a candidate and state party service organization. Modern campaigns employed all the newest technologies of the modern era in the pursuit of victory: computerized voting lists, radio and television advertising, sophisticated polling, telephone banks and campaign consultants and direct mail. Bill Brock gathered all these technologies and services under the umbrella of the Republican National Committee, so that when a Republican candidate needed help, an array of resources was available.

During the Brock era the RNC donor base increased from 500,000 to 1.5 million contributors, and RNC gross income grew from \$10 million to \$40 million, money that Brock used to provide a broad set of campaign and political services.⁷ The national committee was transformed from a federation of fifty very independent state party organizations into a major corporation with fifty state subsidiaries. The RNC displays most of the characteristics of a large corporation, chief of which is a trained cadre of technicians and managers producing services for their customers, in this case candidates and state parties. The salesmen in this political corporation, the field staff, serviced the state parties, candidates, and Republican campaign operatives. The 150 members of the RNC itself, three

from each state, had become more a corporate board of directors than the collection of political leaders from each state it had once been. Under Brock's reforms the state party chairmen became automatic voting members of the RNC.

The United States for most of its history has not had two national political parties but two in each state — separate, independent, and autonomous from their national counterparts in Washington. This rather feudal organization was reflected in the dependent status of national party on the state parties for financial support. During the 1930s and earlier, the Republican National Committee was dependent for a portion of its income from the fifty state parties' fund-raising apparatus.⁸ Power and money are inextricably interwoven in politics, and a national party financially dependent on the states was weak indeed.

That relationship has exactly reversed itself on the Republican side since the new party system reached its full force during the 1980s. Now the Republican National Committee makes grants to the state parties to fund their operations, with inevitable strings being attached on how the money is to be spent. These strings, just as in federal grant-in-aid programs, have had a centralizing and standardizing influence on the state parties. One illustration of the power of these grants: in 1984 one of the major programmatic undertakings of the RNC was the computerization of the voting lists of the fifty states, for which it and the Republican senatorial committee made sizable grants to state parties to accomplish. The very existence of these computerized lists at the state level caused the nature of campaigns to change, with greater emphasis on direct mail, telephone banks, and computer systems, all tied to the computerized voting lists. The RNC grants drove many of the state parties to develop this political technology.

While the renewal of the Republican National Party took a technological and campaign-oriented direction, the Democratic National Committee undertook what is now known as the McGovern reforms, which profoundly altered the structure of their party. Nelson Polsby, in *Consequences of Party Reform*,⁹ argues that the Democratic effort at party renewal may have accelerated the decline of the party as a force in presidential politics, but it is equally clear that the reforms were centralizing in their effect as the rules for the selection of delegates to the Democratic National Committee forced changes in the way state Democratic committees ran their business. Both these courses of party renewal at the national level became models for reforming the two political parties in Massachusetts.

The Brock revolution renewed the prospects for political parties in America. Under Brock's new party system, the RNC added a critically important dimension to its role in politics, becoming a provider of the resources Republican candidates needed to run their individual campaigns. Instead of a volunteer-based staff and national party structure, the new system substituted full-time paid professional campaign operatives to organize the work that had to be done to win elections. The new system was much more centralized and complex. The RNC was now more powerful politically than ever before, albeit under a new mandate and different ground rules. The RNC has since served as a role model for the Democrats, who thus far have been unsuccessful in accomplishing the same transformation in their party. I found the Brock model so compelling a direction in party development that we adopted it for the Massachusetts Republican Party. The direction for us was thus established — remake the Massachusetts State Committee into a candidate service organization providing a set of carefully defined services to Republican candidates for office in Massachusetts. We would do polling, write campaign literature, design newspaper advertisements, draft campaign plans, set up phone banks, consult on campaign management, train managers in our campaign schools, and raise and distribute money to candidates.

The Republican State Strategy

Our strategy for reconstructing the Republican State Party concentrated on services to candidates for the Massachusetts legislature. We chose that body as the subject of our attention because it offered some wonderful opportunities for party building at the local level. More than any other elected officials, Republican legislators had a vested interest in a party to work on their reelection campaigns. Legislators' reelection frequently became the reason for existence of local party committees. They nurtured each other: legislators needed to get reelected and party committees needed work of significance to perform. The legislator was the visible evidence of their success in politics. Campaign workers from successful and unsuccessful legislative races might be recruited for local committees after the election; the campaigns became mechanisms for enlisting new party, as opposed to exclusively candidate, workers. More than congressional or statewide races, which emphasized professional staff to the detriment of volunteers, legislative races tended to be the exclusive preserve of the volunteer.

The campaign organizations of Republican legislators became, over time, the local party organizations, even if the workers never formally associated themselves with the local committees. Incumbent legislators would use their own workers to support candidates of their choice for higher office. While all the workers were not automatically transferable to other candidates, because of differences in personal preferences between legislators and their workers, the natural inclination of anyone, including legislators, is to support those candidates for higher office with whom they agree on the issues, who share values and lifestyles. So workers supporting a conservative Democrat for the legislature could make the conversion to a conservative Democratic candidate for governor with minimal difficulty. Legislative races are one of the least studied yet most significant methods of political socialization for activists in our political system.

If the Republican Party was to be built locally, it would be through the local leadership of Republican legislators and candidates for the legislature. If we were ever going to win statewide and national races, we would have to win local offices, such as legislative seats, first. Every candidate tends to bring into his or her campaign relatives, friends, and neighbors as workers, and the campaign becomes a magnet for drawing uninvolved people into politics. The most efficient way we could rebuild the party organization at the grassroots level was to run more and better campaigns for every office. Campaigns are a graduate school in political leadership and an employment agency for skilled operatives. They direct the best and brightest to party-building after the election.

For nearly a century the farm team system was the method the Republican Party used to govern Massachusetts. If you wanted to be governor or U.S. senator, you first had to run for town or city office, then the state legislature, serve a few terms to learn the business of politics and government, and then consider higher office. When the Democrats took control of the state political system, they adopted, perhaps unconsciously, the same system of recruitment. As of the 1984 election, every congressman in Massachusetts (ten Democrats and one Republican), save one (Gerry Studds), had served in the state legislature or city office before running for Congress. Two thirds of Congress in 1978 were former state legislators, and half of the Massachusetts legislature former town or city officials. There is good reason for this characteristic of the system: when you run for lower office you learn how to give a speech, how to deal with the press, how to raise money and organize a campaign, what the issues are, and what politics in general is all about. When Republicans run for a high office in Massachusetts, never having held a lower office, they

spend the first half of their campaign learning what they are supposed to be doing, while the Democrats are racing ahead. The novice in politics, as in any profession, makes more mistakes of greater seriousness and consequence than the skilled and experienced officeholder. To win higher offices we had to elect more Republican legislators who would provide the pool of successful candidates for higher office as they matured into seasoned politicians.

We chose to concentrate on the legislative races for practical political reasons. Given the limited resources of the state committee, we could more effectively influence a small race for the legislature than a large race for statewide office. We could not hope to elect through our efforts a governor or U.S. senator given the scope, cost, and complexity of those campaigns, but we could be the decisive force in a legislative race. The modern technology of politics had only sporadically been applied by Democrats to legislative races. If we could apply those technologies consistently to a carefully chosen set of targeted races, we might prevail. We defined success simply and clearly: electing more Republicans to the legislature.

Legislative races permitted us to focus voter attention on state rather than the national issues on which we might be vulnerable in the state. Since the Democrats ran Massachusetts from top to bottom, they had to accept complete responsibility for public outrage over high taxes — the chief state issue according to opinion polls — and any scandals and incompetence in state government.

In these local races the issues were of somewhat limited value in winning elections in any case; the character of the candidate and quality of the campaign were of primary importance. The legislative races, more than any other type, allowed us a measure of control over who the candidates were (we could match the demographics of a district with a candidate of the right background) and how they campaigned (most knew little about politics).

While this strategy may seem the self-evident choice, it encountered opposition from another school of thought in the Republican Party. Many believed that we ought to ignore the lower offices and recruit for governor a charismatic leader who would lead us to victory on Election Day. The theory proposed that we needed an attractive figure who could draw new workers and voters into the party by stature, powerful style, and magnetic personality. The problem was not only where to find this prophetic leader but to find one who would be more interested in building the party than his or her own personal following. Would this loyal following be permanently transferable to the party's structure, especially since the figure's presumed attractiveness to the workers was based more on cult of personality than on philosophic conviction? Charismatic figures tend not to have the staying power or permanence needed to construct a stable and permanent institution like a political party. The central problem of the Democratic Party in 1990 is the impending departure of the man around whom the new party in Massachusetts has been organized, Michael Dukakis; while not charismatic, he had been enormously powerful in building and controlling his party. But this power has dissipated significantly since his poll ratings collapsed and he announced that he would not seek reelection.

The argument could certainly be made that the average voter, who is somewhat oblivious to the subtleties of party politics, could more easily focus attention on a strong personality than a set of ideas a political party stood for or the institution of the party itself. I resisted this view of party rebuilding for the duration of my chairmanship, but the theory became reality without formal adoption by the party organization. No political leader in Massachusetts could have galvanized the state electorate to break ranks with their normal, independent, and Democratic status to ally themselves with the Republican Party the way

Ronald Reagan did. He became our charismatic leader without any conscious strategy on our part. His role as the head of the national party was the linchpin we needed to draw voters to the party, as happened in 1984, when Reagan took eighteen of the thirty-nine cities in Massachusetts.

Few of the causes of the Republican Party's present condition in Massachusetts could be dramatically changed by the effort of the state party save one: the campaigns Republican candidates run for office. Except for those few cases in which we won or came close, Republican campaigns in Massachusetts resembled coming-out parties for debutantes. They were polite affairs at which everyone worried about organizational charts, no one took winning too seriously, and no one perspired too much. Republican campaigns were rooted in the past, in an era when politics was a citizen's duty and candidates stood rather than ran for public office. Excessive ambition was regarded as dangerous and unseemly in a candidate, so campaigns were appropriately restrained in time, expense, and size. Politics changed in Massachusetts, but the Republican view of campaigns and public office never did.

Our candidates for the legislature were generally better qualified than their Democratic opponents, but they lost nevertheless. Republicans regularly raised and spent less money, knocked on fewer, if any, doors, recruited fewer volunteers, lacked trained and experienced campaign managers and staff, wrote long, complex, and intellectual tracts of campaign literature no one read, did virtually no direct mail, and never conceived of using computers in a campaign. So they lost, badly and regularly.

The personality, character, and motivation of Republican candidates in Massachusetts differed sharply from those of the Democrats. Republicans were more reserved, more shy and aloof than their opponents; they marched in parades reluctantly, if at all, seldom waded into a crowd to shake hands, and avoided glad-handing and backslapping. They were hesitant candidates, motivated by duty rather than any strong ambition or the need for a relatively well-paying job in the public sector. Idealism and public spirit were noble sentiments for public officials to possess, but they count for little, unfortunately, in getting people elected to office. Someone in Massachusetts politics once suggested that Republicans were excellent at governing, but terrible at politics, while the Democrats were just the opposite. So while Massachusetts Republicans governed well, they seldom, more recently at least, had the opportunity to use their skills.

The Candidate Service Bureau

Providing candidate services on the RNC model remained the central work of the Massachusetts Republican State Committee for the time I served as chairman. All other tasks performed by the party were either incidental or supplemental to our effort to elect more Republicans to the Massachusetts legislature. Attempts to improve the voters' image of the party, develop a new program to govern Massachusetts, programs to rebuild the grass-roots party structure and raise a great deal more money for party coffers, all contributed to but one end — the election of Republicans to legislative office.

The first judgment we made in the operation of the service bureau was which services and resources would be generally available to all candidates and which specifically reserved for those campaigns in which we had the best chance of victory. We concentrated the bulk of our resources in these more winnable campaigns.

All Republican candidates for office would have access to party services we could provide in unlimited volume without increasing staff time or cost. These included campaign

schools, access to the voter name files (computer lists of registered voters), research on incumbents' voting records, issue seminars and briefing papers, manuals on campaign management, sample campaign literature, simple field staff advice on technical questions (e.g., where and when to file campaign finance disclosure forms), and issue and campaign newsletters. Information was inexpensive and therefore available to every Republican candidate who requested it. Reserved for targeted races were direct financial contributions, literature production, campaign plans, survey and polling data, intensive field staff help, get-out-the-vote telephone bank assistance, and direct mail packages. These were obviously the more labor-intensive and expensive services most likely to make the difference between victory and defeat.

The most difficult task was not deciding the services to be provided to targeted and untargated races, but which races fell into which category. We developed four general criteria to judge which races were winnable: vacant legislative seats, favorable demographics and past voting behavior of the district, a candidate of quality, and a strong campaign. Vacant seats, all other factors being equal, are much easier to win than occupied seats unless the incumbent is under indictment or accused of child abuse. Unless a district was hopelessly Democratic in demographic and voting patterns, all vacant seat with decent candidates were targeted as a first priority. We deemed unwinnable those districts in which no Republican candidate for any office had won in the past ten years, or those in which the demographic characteristics were not favorable to a Republican candidate. Conversely, middle-class districts in which serious Republican candidates for whatever office regularly won were placed at the top of the targeted list. The popular vote on referendum questions on November ballots that indicated an economically conservative ideology (for example, establishment of a graduated income tax and Proposition 2 ½, a property tax limitation measure) were also used as statistical measures for targeting. After all these factors were mathematically built into a computer model, with weights assigned to each characteristic, each district was rated from the most to the least winnable. We hired a pollster to produce this model with analysis of each district in the state in 1981.

Once the districts were analyzed, we looked at the personalities of the Democratic and Republican candidates and their respective campaigns. If the incumbent Democrat was invisible in his district, had a poor reputation for constituent work, voted regularly against the ideology of his district, so that the district was considered winnable (on the basis of data from the computer ranking), we placed the race on the targeted list. Our analysis of each race included a careful distinction between the quality of the campaign and the candidate.

We had many excellent candidates by training, reputation, character, and education who were articulate and presentable, but for whatever reason ran poor campaigns. Some candidates of good character made a mediocre impression, because of inability to speak in public, personal shyness, or aloofness in campaign style, yet ran technically proficient campaigns. The two principal personal characteristics we search for in a candidate are an intense desire to win and integrity. This latter characteristic I deemed important because if we elected rogues to office, our small remaining base in the state would fast erode.

Early in the campaign we explained to each candidate the definition of a technically proficient campaign to which their campaigns had to conform in order to be *considered* for targeting. Requirements included (1) a campaign manager (candidates shouldn't run their own campaigns); (2) a threshold level of funds to be raised by the campaign (\$5,000 for the House, \$15,000 for the Senate); (3) a written campaign plan that was being imple-

mented (as opposed to being strictly on paper); (4) attendance by manager and candidate at a campaign school; and (5) in House races, the candidate's agreement to knock on each door in the district.

Using these criteria, the districts and candidates were ranked in three categories: likely winners, marginal seats, and unlikely or hopeless races. We hired campaign field workers who then determined the mix of services and direct financial help each of the likely winners needed. Given the wide differences in campaign quality and resources, each mix of services was different. Some races needed nothing but large amounts of money; others had limitless money but poor campaign literature. For those presentable candidates whose campaigns were generally well directed but whose judgment on spending money we questioned, our field staff spent the money from our treasury for them. In lieu of a direct contribution we would produce and place a newspaper or radio advertisement, write and print a brochure, or do a direct mail piece. In 1984 we wrote, laid out, and printed 500,000 campaign tabloids for legislative candidates. We thus ensured that campaign weaknesses were remedied without argument or extensive explanation, since most candidates were happy to accept any help from us.

We concentrated not only resources but also our candidate recruitment efforts in targeted districts. While it was certainly desirable to have Republican candidates for every seat, it was far more important that winnable seats be sought by good candidates.

In early 1981 we developed our first campaign school (one night a week for ten weeks) for potential candidates and their managers. The party suffered from an absence of trained and seasoned Massachusetts Republican operatives to run campaigns. The state committee had not run real campaign schools for more than fifteen years; the Republican leadership in the House had held some classes, but they turned out to be war story seminars. Thomas Jefferson would lose a race for the legislature if incompetent managers were running his campaign, while an average candidate could win with hard work and skilled operatives directing the effort.

The schools covered polling and survey research, campaign literature design, election laws, personal campaigning by the candidate, identifying voter support, getting out supporters on Election Day, fund-raising, advertising, media relations, overall strategy and the use of issues, how to research an incumbent's record, direct mail, and targeting by precinct and demographic groups. We also issued a manual that covered all these subjects as supplemental reading; it remains in use by the state party today.

As a follow-up to the school, each election year we produced a newsletter for candidates and managers that outlined what a campaign should be accomplishing in each of its phases. Later in the election year we held schools for targeted race personnel only, in which we reviewed recent state polling data and developed campaign themes that were beginning to come into focus. As a group, we reviewed each of the campaigns individually to critique them and share experiences to bring perspective to the candidates who were, without doubt, simultaneously in advanced states of shock and exhilaration. Sharing the fears common to each of them helped relieve the candidates' anxiety and focused attention on the important goals to be accomplished before Election Day.

One of the weaknesses of the Campaign Service Bureau, which we remedied in 1986, was incumbent research. Most candidates, no matter how well instructed, seldom found the time or developed the expertise to analyze thoroughly their opponents' record. For the 1986 election we constructed a file on each incumbent Democrat with their voting records judged by a variety of special-interest groups (which rated them), their opponents' personal financial disclosure forms (required by state law), attendance at legislative sessions,

roll call votes on a broad spectrum of issues, their campaign finance reports from preceding elections, and any statements made on the floor of the legislature (recorded by television cameras — all sessions of the House were televised). We had to leave it to candidates to research their opponents' local press statements and any contradictions between them and their voting records. A hard look at voting records usually yielded a supply of contradictory votes and statements which, if cleverly advertised, could unseat an incumbent.

In 1982 we had one Democratic candidate for state representative in an open seat directly contradict himself from one speech to another on major issues, depending on the group he was addressing, so we wrote an attack brochure for our Republican candidate, documenting these convenient changes in conscience by date and location. This became the central issue of the campaign.

Former Congresswoman Margaret Heckler, in one of her races for Congress, found through careful incumbent research that her Democratic opponent had never before registered to vote, while claiming to have been an active party Democrat. She chose the right time and place during a debate, with all the media watching, to announce her interesting discovery.

In the 1980–1984 election cycles we came to some conclusions about the relation between campaign spending and victory. While a big budget did not guarantee election, we found a striking correlation between spending and winning. Republican candidates were regularly outspent by their Democratic opponents, partly because 80 percent of the seats in the legislature were held by Democrats, and incumbents can raise money much more easily than challengers. To discourage any challengers of either party, Democratic incumbents raise enormous amounts of money for their campaigns in nonelection years. Republican incumbents seldom engage in similar tactics and must therefore build their war chests when opposition actually appears. Even given this disparity in behavior, our incumbents usually outtraised their Democratic challengers by virtue of their incumbency. In open seats prior to 1984 Democratic candidates outspent our candidates by sizable ratios. This was because the Democratic Party had trained an army of grassroots Democrats to give money in political campaigns; once indoctrinated, these givers contributed to many Democratic campaigns. Our donor base, which had been strong in the 1960s, had deteriorated through disuse. Fewer campaigns meant fewer requests for donations, so our donors lost the habit of giving and new ones were not recruited to replace those who died, moved, or tired of politics.

In legislative races, establishing name recognition for the candidate is the greater part of the campaign work. Issues are of small consequence in low-visibility campaigns, so spending money to increase a candidate's name recognition is critical to victory. Improving a candidate's visibility requires money for direct mail, advertising, and campaign literature. Money is indispensable to victory.

Providing campaign services required more money and a larger staff for the state party. Income from fund-raising rose from \$203,000 in 1979 to \$910,000 in 1986, primarily attributable to an increase in small donations from people approached through in-house direct mail and telephone banks we created in 1983. The number of donors increased from 6,000 in 1979 to 35,000 in 1986. The staff level at party headquarters stood at three in the spring of 1980 and increased to twelve by 1986 (we reduced the staff after each election from twelve to seven or eight, expanding the staff in the spring of each election year).

We concentrated more money in our targeted races in each election between 1980 and 1986. We first did this systematically in the 1984 campaigns, giving targeted candidates

\$2,500 in direct contributions and \$1,000 in services. In the 1986 election cycle that combined figure was increased to \$7,500. In addition, we formed for the 1984 election cycle a quiet working group of Republican and business PACs interested in changing the complexion of the legislature. There were two conservative taxpayer PACs and two Republican PACs, one of the House Republican Committee and the other a moderate Republican PAC chaired by Elliott Richardson. The Friday Group, as we called it, met twice a month to discuss the races. We did not always agree on whom we would help. The conservative PACs also helped conservative Democrats, while the Republican groups never did. The state party made no ideological distinctions, while the Richardson PAC tended to give to more moderate candidates. The importance of the group was that it reached enough consensus that most targeted candidates received an additional \$3,000 to \$4,000 over what the state party contributed.

Deborah Cochran, who had been a state representative for four years, ran for Congress unsuccessfully and served as vice chairman of the Republican State Committee. In 1983 she entered the employ of Mike Valerio, a new right activist and businessman. Cochran arranged to have two dozen major business figures, moderate and conservative, pledge a certain amount of money to candidates on whom she, working with the Friday Group, agreed to concentrate resources. Valerio, to his credit, seldom interfered in decisions on who received money, even when moderate Republicans were included.

As a result of a Republican city and town committee program we initiated, fund-raising at the town and city committee level contributed dramatically to increased local party treasuries, which reached \$189,000 in 1984. Without central direction, these local committees poured their resources into legislative contests, further increasing our candidates' campaign funds.

Rebuilding the Party Organization

The realization of the importance of local organization gradually became clear at the Republican National Committee during the Dick Richards and Frank Fahrenkopf chairmanships (1981 to 1988). Both men brought long service as state and county party chairman (Utah and Nevada, respectively) to the national chairmanship. They did not have to be convinced that the missing element in the Brock program was local party development; both knew it from their own experience. Almost simultaneously with the national committee's new emphasis on organization, we in Massachusetts realized that the major weakness in both the 1980 and 1982 election campaigns was the absence of a coherent local organizational development program.

The Democratic Party's theory of organizational development relies on the interest groups with which the party is allied to provide workers. Thus the teachers' association, AFL-CIO, and state employee unions provide campaign help, contributions, and a mechanism to deliver the message of Democratic candidates. The Republican Party, conversely, contacts voters directly without intermediary interest groups, a much more expensive and technology-intensive mechanism than the Democratic medium of communication. The effort to create a Massachusetts Republican grassroots party organization was an attempt to remedy our overreliance on technology and underuse of people to win elections.

In 1983 we launched what became known as Project Grassroots. Our effort was entirely independent of the program the Republican National Committee had initiated, which was ill suited to the Massachusetts Republican organization. We weren't targeted for any help in this area in any case.

If the Republican Party had held the governorship, creating a new party organization would have been easier. Volunteers from the gubernatorial campaigns would have served as a list of potential party workers, particularly if the governor were closely identified with the party in their minds. The patronage power of the governor of a major industrial state like Massachusetts would attract volunteers whose enthusiasm would be in direct proportion to the perception of a public sector position awaiting them after good and faithful service in the campaign. We didn't hold the governor's chair, and none of the Republican candidates who had stood for statewide office in 1982 (all of whom lost) had generated extensive volunteer lists to draw upon.

In a series of pilot mailings in 1983 and 1984, we asked for money and enclosed a volunteer card requesting volunteers to work for the Republican candidates on the ballot in the particular towns or cities in which the mailing was being done. While the response card still included a place to volunteer for party service, it was not a popular form of work; the candidates received more interest than the party. The results astonished us. When the state committee sent a mailing to all registered Massachusetts Republicans, one percent responded with a check, which was the financial break-even point. The mailing paid for itself but made no profit, except in adding names of new contributors for future use. The Project Grassroots mailings produced 5 to 8 percent response rates, with income five to six times the expense. On average, a thousand-piece mailing costing \$200 would generate fifty individual responses, averaging \$20 each, netting \$800 for Republican town committee treasuries. As important as the income produced was the number of volunteer cards returned with the contributions that indicated a willingness to work for one or more of the Republican candidates listed.

Our finance director, Jack Zadow, also expert in grassroots organizing, developed an intriguing explanation for the phenomenal response rates of these local mailings. First, the mailings were signed by a Republican leader. Even if the recipient did not know the name of the signatory, the title of the person (Chairman, East Podunk Republican Town Committee) meant a lot more to a potential donor on a letter than my name as the Republican State Committee chairman. Anything that made the mailing seem more authentically local and less professional increased the response rate. When the text of the solicitation letter and the response card included the names of specific Republican candidates, Republican voters could register their enthusiasm for a particular candidate by volunteering to work.

In all, 140 city and town committee mailings in 1984 raised \$189,000 for local treasuries, more than had been raised locally for the previous four elections combined.¹⁰ Five thousand new volunteers were recruited to party work, many for the U.S. Senate primary fight between Elliott Richardson and Ray Shamie. Both campaigns used the volunteer cards to help staff their telephone banks.

With the money and volunteers raised, we embarked on a second local party program, the Republican Candidate Directory, for the 1984 campaign. The directory consisted of eleven-by-seventeen-inch newspaper-style tabloids, which pictured on the front, with brief biographies, the president, vice president, and the Republican candidate for U.S. Senate, Ray Shamie. The inside pages featured all the Republican candidates for lower offices, from state representative to U.S. Congress, in the particular town or city for which each tabloid was produced. A quarter of the tabloid was devoted to a statement of the economic philosophy of the party. In all we designed and produced 450,000 of these tabloids for the seventy communities that agreed to distribute and pay the costs of producing them.

The party committee in each town or city had to be convinced to participate in the directory. Only 50 percent of the 140 towns and cities that participated in the Project Grassroots mailing also accepted the candidates' directory. The condition of the local party organization determined whether it was distributed door to door by party workers, mailed, or inserted in the local newspaper. In the majority of communities it was distributed to all voting households; in other areas it was mailed only to independents and Republicans. We let the local party committee decide its own strategy for targeted voters and methods of distribution. By requiring each local committee to pay for the design and printing we increased the likelihood of its actually being distributed, since it was unlikely that any community would pay for it and not make use of it. The project was simply conceived, so it was easily explained to local party leaders. We did not burden local committees with any unreasonable task they would be unable to complete. We did not want to frighten local committees unused to this sort of grassroots work.

A sizable proportion of the registered Republican voters in Massachusetts were contacted through four state party programs in 1984: the city and town mailing program; the Candidate Directory; a solicitation letter from the state committee to all registered Republicans, which I signed as chairman, asking for money with an enclosed membership card; and the state party telephone banks with which we prospected for new donors by calling every Republican household in the state and asking for \$15. These strategies were designed to show the Republican electorate, demoralized by a decade of defeats in Massachusetts, that the Massachusetts GOP, on its way to a comeback, needed their financial and volunteer help and their enthusiastic vote. Through these voter programs we hoped to mobilize the Republican electorate to more active participation in the political system, and in the process create a resurgent Republican party.

For the 1984 and 1986 elections we created a voter name file, a computerized list of all registered voters, with street address, zip code, and telephone number and demographic data such as ethnic background and sex, along with the federal census tract and party registration. All local party committees and Republican candidates had access to the computer system to produce mailing labels for any targeted universe of voters (for example, Italian-American independent women voters who live in western Massachusetts), telephone bank calling lists, or walking lists for door-to-door canvassing. We used the computer file for our own financial mailings and phone banks, while local party committees employed it for both the grassroots mailings and the distribution of the candidate directory. The Reagan-Bush and Shamie and Richardson U.S. Senate campaigns had each set up telephone banks to identify their respective voters and get them out to vote on Election Day. By using our voter name file, each campaign avoided the redundant effort of looking up telephone numbers. The state party produced the service for every campaign to avoid the inefficiency of candidate maintenance of the files, and we decided to provide it in all future elections.

The voter name file gave the state committee itself political power by making candidates dependent on the committee for these otherwise prohibitively expensive services. The file increased the technical capacity of each of our candidate's campaigns to contact voters quickly and efficiently: we could produce mailing labels for any universe of voters in forty-eight hours. The file was the most important work we did to facilitate contact between the party organization, our candidates, and the voting public.

The aftermath of the 1984 election presented us with unique opportunities for party building. Reagan-Bush won Massachusetts with 51.5 percent of the vote, nearly ten points better than 1980, Ray Shamie received 45 percent of the vote which, while not close to

winning, was a credible showing, and the party made its best gains in the legislature since 1962. Each successful local race, our local party-building projects, and the major statewide campaigns, successful or not, had generated new volunteers who had never before participated in a political campaign.

These new workers had to be quickly integrated into the party structure while their interest remained high. As previously indicated, the town and city committees had dwindled in membership from 14,000 in the late 1960s to 6,000 in 1980. We counted between 3,000 and 4,000 new workers, most of them under fifty years old, who participated in the 1984 election cycle. The Shamie-Richardson primary contest drew 107,000 independent and former Democrat votes in a total Republican primary vote of 270,000. Richardson polling data as of the day before the primary showed him beating Shamie, albeit narrowly, among registered Republicans. The conservative Ray Shamie received a sizable majority from nontraditional Republican voters, most of whom were Roman Catholic, young voters. While these people did not participate as workers, they had voted, perhaps for the first time, in a Republican primary, and might if asked through a direct mail piece, register as Republicans. Party building would be conducted on two levels, among the new workers and the new voters.

To reach the new voters we first had to organize the new workers. In his victory speech on primary night, Ray Shamie referred to the new Republican Party upon which his victory was founded. The new party was more conservative, more ethnic, and less WASP than the traditional party. Elliott Richardson, who had turned a forty-point lead over Shamie in the polls six months earlier into a twenty-point defeat, represented the old party in almost every respect. A respected international statesman, he was Harvard educated, had been both lieutenant governor and attorney general before his appointment as undersecretary of State in January 1969 by President Nixon. He held more cabinet posts than any man in American history, resigning in the middle of the Watergate scandal rather than accede to Nixon's demand to fire the Watergate special prosecutor, Archibald Cox. Richardson, a Brahmin Yankee gentleman, quintessential WASP of Colonial lineage, was a moderate Republican who spent virtually his entire career in public service. He was crushed in the primary by a newcomer to politics, Ray Shamie, a conservative businessman who had run for the U.S. Senate in 1982 against Ted Kennedy. Shamie was of Syrian and French extraction, Roman Catholic upbringing, and Republican by choice, not family background. Brought up in a poor family, he had made millions by his own invention and entrepreneurial enterprise.

These two men epitomized the organizational conflict that was to develop between the old and new party as we tried to graft onto the traditional structure the new workers who had emerged as a force in the 1984 election. Having had much experience in previous elections with turf battles between factions in the party, we decided to create a new level of organization rather than force unwilling local party committees to accept unwelcome new people into their midst. In some areas of the state the new people quietly took over committee leadership with no fight at all. In the more vibrant and active committees the new workers were not only welcomed, they were immediately given responsibility. The more inactive and useless the committee, the more threatened it was by interlopers who arrived on the scene with new ideas on organizational development. The fights from these leadership conflicts would have been so contentious and unsettling and the scars so long lasting that we decided systematically to avoid them if we could.

Outside New England the fundamental organizational unit at the grassroots level of the party is the precinct, which is organized by the county party committee, the intermediate

organizational entity between the precinct and the state committee. In Massachusetts there existed no intermediate party committees, only the town ward and state committees. This means in practical terms that the state committee must deal with 351 city and town party committees, a managerial nightmare. Forty years ago each county in Massachusetts had a strong county Republican Club which, while formally chartered by the state committee, was not statutorily mandated.

The state party bylaws still provide for regional units of organization. In each of the forty Massachusetts senatorial districts, there is supposed to be a council made up of the two elected state committee members and the ward, town, and city committee chairmen of the communities in the district. At least for the past decade, these senatorial committees have been completely inoperative, having diminished in vigor as the towns and wards did. The regional units of organization were central to the organizational theory of the old party leadership.

Combining our need for a regional political unit with the need to integrate new party workers into the traditional organization, we formed eleven Republican Congressional Councils, using Massachusetts's eleven congressional districts as boundaries. We simply went around the local stonewallers and created a new organizational entity to which the new workers could belong. Since it was they for the most part who would form these councils, we could be sure the exclusionary tendencies of the old party would be minimized. And eleven organizational units are a manageable number for us to deal with regularly.

The absence of vigorous leadership in the local party remained the single major obstacle to its renewal. We noticed that even in staunchly Democratic towns and cities, one or two strong Republican Party leaders at the head of a town committee could have profound effects on election results for local and state offices. Our problem was finding, training, and placing strong leaders in responsible positions in which they could employ their talents usefully. By creating a relatively small number of new organizations we could take the strongest leaders from the latest election campaign and give them a structure in which to channel their energies.

Under Massachusetts law no organization could use the names Republican or Democrat except by vote of the state committee of the respective party. The resistance we thought we might encounter from the old guard on the state committee when they were presented with the bylaws and charters of these new councils never materialized. A few of my adversaries were nervous that these councils would increase my power in the party, and grumbled as we presented each charter for approval. Rumors circulated in the networks of the old party of a move to counteract the councils' power by reinstating some of the old clubs. The old guard was itself split between those threatened by our new organizational inventions and those whose desire to win overcame their fear of losing turf. The old guard never rose from its lethargy to effectively oppose anything we did in organizational innovation. Those most threatened were coincidentally the least organized and effective. By 1986 we had organized seven congressional councils with 1,500 paid members.

Our second organizational innovation was the reform of the party nominating conventions held every four years to endorse a slate of candidates for constitutional office. The state Democrats, under Dukakis's rule, broadly expanded their conventions beyond participation by only Democratic town committees. Their conventions became opportunities to expand the worker base of the Democratic Party, to increase the sense of participation in party policy and ultimately in governance.

In 1982 the Republican State Committee ran a traditional convention using rules for delegate selection and allocation long accepted by the party organization. All delegates to the convention were either chosen by the Republican town and city committees or the formal grassroots party organization or were voting ex-officio delegates (legislators, congressmen, and county officials). The number of delegates allocated to each local committee was based on the vote for president in the 1980 election. After a rather contentious debate, the state committee, at my strong urging, voted to hold a smaller convention (1,600 delegates), both because of the space limitations in the location at which we had contracted to hold the event and because I believed it would involve less staff time.

While this convention may have been a model of administrative efficiency, it failed to build the party organization except cosmetically, lacked credibility to the news media and opinion makers, and smacked of bossism and manipulation.

The small size of the convention only underscored the small base of the party in Massachusetts. We had no requirement in the rules that a person be registered as a Republican for some period of time before being chosen as a delegate. In the older urban areas where the party was a paper organization or totally nonexistent, the Democratic political machines, in concert with one of our Republican candidates for governor, organized the local party committees with Democrats who had recently registered as Republicans, but showed no genuine change of party allegiance, as members. These new committee members elected themselves delegates to the Republican convention. Under our rules a party committee could be formed where none had existed by a simple meeting of interested “Republicans” and a petition sent to the state committee stating their interest in being designated an official committee, which would then be automatically approved. Using this technique, Democratic Mayor Kevin White controlled much of the Boston Republican delegation to the 1982 state convention. This packing of the convention gave credibility to those defeated candidates who questioned whether the convention was representative of the party. John Sears, who ultimately received the party’s nomination in the primary, did not even bother having his name placed in nomination at the convention. Since there was no legal requirement that a candidate compete at the convention, he simply avoided it altogether. Finally, nothing in the rules distinguished between active working committees and inactive ones, which, while fulfilling the legal requirement for existence, were incapable of doing any work at all and sometimes discouraged party activity by Republicans not on the committee, as a threat to their turf.

The convention rules needed reform. In 1985, preparing for the 1986 convention to nominate candidates for statewide office — governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, secretary of state, treasurer, and auditor — we drafted a set of reforms designed to cure what had ailed the convention four years earlier. Our original draft proposed several important changes:

- An increase in the size of the convention from 1,600 to 3,000 delegates to indicate a wider base of party support.
- Three bonus delegates to reward those local committees which performed seven tasks we thought important. (Did the committee in 1984 or 1985 raise and spend money for candidate support, have a candidate for the House or Senate on the ballot, distribute the candidate’s literature to each household, start a Young Republican Club, get a local Democratic

official to switch parties, have full committee membership, or hold a political event?)

- The election of 40 percent of the delegates at forty regional caucuses at which *any* registered Republican could vote or run for delegate, with 50 percent of the delegates allocated on the basis of the presidential vote plus any bonus delegates to be selected using the traditional delegate selection method — Republican town and ward committees.
- Automatic delegate status for elected Republican officeholders, state committee members (both traditional categories), and any officially chartered Republican organizations. (We had created two dozen in the previous five years.)
- No exclusionary rule requiring, as the Democrats did, a candidate for any statewide office to receive 15 percent or more of the delegate vote to be allowed access to the Republican primary ballot.
- Listing the winners of the convention first on the primary ballot under the office they were running for and noting “endorsed by the Republican State Convention.”
- Making it virtually impossible to pack inactive or nonexistent committees by moving up the date by which they had to be organized.

These reforms were designed to open the convention to greater participation by party workers, candidates, and donors, not only members of Republican town and city committees; reward activity by local committees with bonus delegates; make the convention a main media event with enough credibility by its size and breadth of representation that its endorsement would be a major benefit to a candidate (thereby increasing the likelihood that all candidates would participate in the convention); reduce the bossism and manipulation endemic to previous conventions; and do all this in such a way that we could institutionalize the reforms as a permanent change in our organization and conduct of conventions in the future. This latter condition meant widely publicizing the changes, holding a public hearing, encouraging party debate about them, putting on the drafting committee some opponents of the reforms, and genuinely allowing the Rules Committee to modify our initial proposal and winning the reforms on the floor of the state committee by a decisive margin.

The local party organizations, outraged by the dilution of their power at the convention implicit in these reforms, protested at sporadic meetings they held — for some moribund committees the first in years — across the state. If nothing else, the plan resuscitated, at least temporarily, inactive and paper committees anxious to protect their threatened political turf. In my announcement of the plan I attacked the useless committees, hoping that since nothing else seemed to work perhaps open criticism might force some activity. Negative incentives do work sometimes. While every local party official was initially upset by the rumors of what was included in the plan, the most inactive or useless committees were those which screamed the loudest. A complete explanation of the reforms satisfied all the

active committees, particularly when they realized that they would be recognized and rewarded by the incentive system for their good work.

The final plan proposed by the Rules Committee and approved by the state committee, while containing the major points of my original plan, was different enough that it did not smack of a rubber stamp. Adopted unanimously by the state committee, it was accepted by most factions of the party, increasing the likelihood that its initiatives would be part of future conventions. (In fact, Ray Shamie's 1990 state convention rules contained all the 1986 reforms and broadly expanded the number of open-caucus-selected delegates.) One contentious change was the 15 percent rule, which requires a candidate to obtain at least that percentage of the convention vote to appear on the primary ballot. The Rules Committee proposed, and the state committee adopted, a 10 percent rule, which while less restrictive than the Democrats' 15 percent rule, nevertheless emphasized the exclusionary image from which the Republican Party had suffered for many years. The Democratic Party in Massachusetts held enough political capital with the electorate that it could afford to look exclusionary at its convention without damage at the polls. We could not, so I opposed the rule.

When the Democrats had adopted their 15 percent convention rule in 1982, it was promptly challenged by several Democratic candidates for lieutenant governor who were denied access to the primary ballot because they did not meet the requirement. Massachusetts election law explicitly permitted anyone, properly registered and having obtained the requisite number of signatures on nomination papers, a place on the primary ballot. Court decisions in other states had for a decade been moving toward the deregulation of the political parties, giving them greater authority over the conduct of their internal affairs. The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court held, in a landmark decision which astonished both political activists and the legal community, that in spite of state law providing full access to the primary ballot, political parties could within limits restrict that access even for those candidates who met all the legal requirements. The 15 percent rule was thus upheld by the courts.

The effect of both the Democratic 15 percent and Republican 10 percent rules was the same. By requiring a minimum convention vote, both ensured that all candidates for state-wide office would have their names placed in nomination at the convention, making a serious effort at appealing to delegates for their support. These rules clearly enhanced the power of the convention and the formal party organization over what it had with unrestricted ballot access. A second effect was to concentrate attention in the primary on fewer candidates. Fringe or weak candidates who might distort the primary vote would be excluded from consideration.

Primary debates with fewer candidates would mean that each would have more time to discuss his or her views and the media more space per candidate for in-depth analysis of the views. The rules increased the likelihood that a candidate could obtain the primary nomination with a majority rather than plurality vote, and therefore the possibility that the nominated candidate was truly representative of the respective party. Our 10 percent rule was good for the party and organization, but bad for our image.

The ultimate measure of success for political parties remains the number of votes the party nominees receive on Election Day. While intermediate goals such as party registration, the number of candidates who run for office, advances in fund-raising, campaign services, issue research, and image building may improve prospects for long-term success

at the voting booth, they don't assure it. Such other factors as national policy and economic conditions, the perceived ability of the party to govern if its candidates are elected, the number of incumbent officeholders retiring, the relative personal strengths of the nominees of both parties matched against each other, and chance historical events affect the result. State party organizations have little if any control over these factors, but they can be decisive in the volatile climate of a political campaign.

Based on the results of the four election cycles (1980–1986) covered by this article, I suggest some speculative conclusions about the Republican Party's efforts at party renewal, the weaknesses of the Brock model for party renewal, and the prospects for the party in 1990 in Massachusetts.

Measured by intermediate goals, the renewal program was a great success: the income of the state party increased 450 percent, campaign services and technology that were nonexistent in the state before 1980 were developed and targeted to legislative races, and the number of, and mechanisms for participation by, party workers increased. Measured by the ultimate goals of electing more Republicans to the legislature — the central focus of this party renewal effort — the effort was a more modest success. In legislative races the party made the following net gains or losses: gained one House and one Senate seat in 1980 (30 House and 7 Senate), lost one House seat and remained the same in the Senate in 1982 (29 House and 7 Senate), gained five House and one Senate seat in 1984 (34 House and 8 Senate), and lost one House seat and remained the same in the Senate in 1986 (33 House and 8 Senate). Over these four election cycles the party gained six seats in the legislative delegation, a 17 percent increase. The legislative gains in 1984 were the largest since 1962 in absolute numbers, the party having lost seats fairly steadily in each election since the mid-1960s.

The most striking aspects of these four election cycles is the disparity between the dramatic increase in Republican resources measured in money, workers, and campaign services, and the modest improvement (17 percent) in the number of legislative seats. Substantially more resources did not translate into substantially more seats. The gains in legislative seats were made in 1980 and 1984, when Ronald Reagan headed the Republican ticket and the Democratic presidential ticket was particularly weak. In both 1980 and 1984 Reagan carried Massachusetts, however narrowly, for the first time for a Republican presidential candidate since 1956.

Republican legislative gains in 1984 may be attributable to two factors working at the same time: the Reagan coattails and the campaign services and financial contributions made by the state party in targeted races. Either one alone would have been insufficient. Table 1 shows the number of races that Republican House candidates lost by under 1,500 votes over five elections cycles, the increase in the number of House seats, the percentage of vote of the Republican candidate at the top of the ticket (gubernatorial or presidential), and average campaign contributions.¹¹

The data in Table 1 suggests that the party campaign service programs moved narrow races to victorious ones, since the number of races Republican candidates lost by under 1,500 votes declined from fourteen in 1978, a year in which Frank Hatch received 47 percent of the vote for governor, to eight in 1980 and four in 1984. All the races targeted by the state party from 1982 onward turned out to include the races won or lost narrowly.

In 1988, with Bush winning 46 percent of the vote in Massachusetts, the Republican Party saw a net decline of one seat in the House while the Senate remained the same. Shammie dramatically increased state party funding to \$1.5 million in 1988 from our high point of \$910,000 in 1986, but he did not regard campaign services and direct contributions to

Table 1

Year	No. of GOP House Candidates Losing by Less Than 1,500 Votes	GOP Net Gain or Loss in House	Republican Presidential/ Gubernatorial Percentage in Massachusetts	Contribution of State Party to Targeted Seats*
1976	11	-2	42%	\$ 500
1978	14	-1	47%	\$1,000
1980	8	+1	42%*	\$1,500
1982	4	-1	38%	\$2,000
1984	4	+5	51%	\$3,500**
1986	2	-1	30%	\$7,800**

* John Anderson took 15% of the Massachusetts vote, though Reagan carried the state narrowly.

** The Friday Group was responsible for \$3,000-\$4,000 in additional campaign contributions per targeted candidate.

candidates as the central work of the committee. He instead concentrated on party organizational development.

My own view is that the Republican voter base in the state remains too small to make any dramatic improvement in the legislative or congressional delegation without the addition of new voter blocs that are not part of the National Republican Presidential Coalition. In fact, in the last four presidential races, the Republican nominee consistently received 8 percent fewer votes in Massachusetts than nationally, as shown in Table 2.

The Republican presidential coalition vote is 8 percent smaller in Massachusetts than in the country as a whole. The party must increase its base 8 to 10 percent in Massachusetts to become competitive in statewide and legislative races. This will require the Massachusetts party to look and think differently from the Republican National Party. This does not mean returning to the age of liberal Republicanism or adopting the Dukakis agenda of New Age liberalism.

It does mean designing a new party platform on top of, not in place of, the national platform, which appeals to specific identified voter groups that presently float between the parties in varying degrees without alienating the existing base. The political technology of the Republican state party will certainly be helpful in delivering the message and images that may attract these new voter groups. But in this case the technology is not the message; it is no more than a medium to communicate a carefully crafted message. Political technology has its limit, and the Massachusetts party has reached it. The fascination with high-tech campaigns, expensive political technology, direct mail and telephone banks which we fostered in the state party by adopting the Brock model of party renewal has obscured the weakness in the party's base of support. Well-financed and well-run

Table 2

		Percentage of Two-Party Vote, Massachusetts	Percentage of Two-Party Vote, Nationally
Ford	1976	42	51
Reagan	1980	42	50
Reagan	1984	51	59
Bush	1988	46	54

campaigns with appealing candidates are a necessary but insufficient condition for election success in Massachusetts: an expanded platform skillfully communicated to voters extending beyond the national party agenda is the missing element.

Party workers have long argued that the state party has failed to articulate the national party agenda of economic conservatism and that this failure is responsible for the party's failure to achieve majority status. A poll conducted by Arthur Finkelstein and Associates in March 1986 for the state party indicated that the Massachusetts electorate believed Republicans were more likely to cut taxes than the Democrats by a 44 percent to 30 percent margin, and to impose the death penalty (Republicans 43%, Democrats 18%) and less likely to support giveaway programs (49% Democrats vs. 16% Republicans). The voters do understand the Republican message; it simply is not enough to attract sufficient of their votes to win.

During 1980–1986 the state party engaged in a number of programs to present the traditional Republican message to Massachusetts voters. In 1986 we ran a \$30,000 institutional radio advertising campaign to improve the image of the party, using orthodox Republican themes. In 1981 and 1983–1984, we instituted the legislative reform initiative petition; and in 1985–1986, with Citizens for Limited Taxation, we initiated the income surtax repeal petition to recover the party's lost reputation for government reform. We created a shadow cabinet parallel to the Dukakis cabinet to publicize Republican responses to the Democratic agenda. The Republican caucus in the legislature filed a package of bills each year for a decade of innovation in state government policy, but all were guided by orthodox Republican ideology. The party in the legislature and the state committee relentlessly attacked Dukakis and his Democratic troops for high taxes, overregulation, bureaucratic excesses, runaway spending, and liberal social policy. While the Republicans accurately anticipated the current fiscal crisis of the state in their decade-long attack on Dukakis, prophetic success has not improved the party's standing among the voters according to a poll taken by the state party in the spring of 1989.

Two issues, corruption and taxes, have traditionally dominated state politics in Massachusetts. Whether deserved or not, Massachusetts had a reputation as one of the most "squalid, corrupt and despicable" political systems of the fifty states, as Theodore H. White once wrote.¹² The term "Taxachusetts" arose from public perception of extraordinarily high taxes in Massachusetts. Michael Dukakis capitalized on the tax issue to win the 1974 gubernatorial election when he gave a lead-pipe guarantee not to raise state taxes to balance the state budget. His subtheme in that same campaign, as well as the 1982 race, was integrity in government. Dukakis's popularity in Massachusetts and its subsequent collapse after his defeat for president in 1988 are attributable to his reputation for personal integrity (a characteristic that the public perceives absent in the political system generally in Massachusetts) and his voter-perceived loss of integrity following that election.

Perhaps the most common refrain heard from voters in Massachusetts about Mike Dukakis, or a variation thereof, had been "At least he is honest. Even if you don't agree with him, you have to respect his honesty." During his years in public life Dukakis has assiduously cultivated this image of a Puritan in Babylon. His reputation for integrity and a booming state economy with a state treasury overflowing with tax revenue produced his 70 to 80 percent approval ratings and his 70 percent total vote in November 1986. The 1988 campaign for president brought out dramatically and colorfully damaging information about Dukakis's ten years as governor. But more damaging than any campaign advertising was the precipitous decline of the state economy and consequently state tax

revenues and the seemingly uncontrolled rise in the budget deficit caused both by enormous annual increases in the state budget during the preceding five years and falling revenues. Instead of accepting and dealing with the facts, Dukakis denied them in one statement after another. In the months following the 1988 election, the budget difficulties exploded, making it apparent to the voting public that Dukakis had been less than candid about the state's fiscal condition. The governor's disingenuous behavior and perceived failure to lead collapsed his public approval ratings from the highest of any governor in the United States to the lowest (one poll had him at a 13 percent approval rating, which may be the lowest for any governor in modern American political history).

The work of the Massachusetts Democrats will certainly be made much easier if Massachusetts Republicans fail to take advantage of their opponents' weakness. The uncertain future of the Democratic coalition with the departure of Mike Dukakis presents opportunities to the Republican Party to attract formerly Democratic voter blocs to their own coalition. Ultimately it must be the Republican standard-bearer who attracts new voter groups to the party. A good argument could be made that the Reagan coalition did not take conscious form until *after* the 1980 election. Voters did not cast their ballots to elect Ronald Reagan president as strongly as they did to remove Jimmy Carter from that position. Once in office, Reagan masterfully constructed a coalition that did reelect him and his program in 1984. Similarly, Massachusetts Republicans may need to win the governorship on the basis of William Weld's strengths and John Silber's weaknesses, and once in office consciously construct a more positive and lasting statewide coalition. The point is that it may not be necessary for the Republicans to define and form a gubernatorial coalition with a distinct set of issues to attract new voter groups if they can fully exploit Silber's weaknesses as a candidate: his abrasiveness, his alliance with the old Democratic Party of Kevin Harrington, William Bulger, and Kevin White, and his liberal fiscal policies designed to appeal to the construction and public employee unions and the interest groups that rely on state government largess.

Perhaps our greatest strategic failure during the seven years I served as chairman of the Massachusetts Republican Party was concentrating on legislative races to the exclusion of statewide ones. The top of the ticket usually has a profound effect on the outcome for legislative candidates. The great difficulty for the party in 1990 is that the coalition behind Bill Weld is different from the local aggregation of voter blocs Republican candidates for the legislature will attract. The top of the ticket may not provide the coattails needed to significantly improve Republican representation in the legislature.

Should Massachusetts Republicans lose the governorship in 1990 and fail to increase their numbers in the legislature, will the necessary conclusion be that party renewal is impossible? Given the sorry condition of state government and voter anger with incumbents, it would seem the Democrats would be in trouble and the Republicans would be the natural beneficiary of the situation. Perhaps the greatest opportunity the 1990 Democratic primary results present to the Republican Party is the collapse of the Dukakis coalition. Dukakis voters will never support John Silber, and the new party organization built by Dukakis will not mobilize the electorate for John Silber. Party loyalty is nevertheless a powerful magnate to keep parts of the Democratic coalition in place. Republicans are still outnumbered by the Democrats and will be for the foreseeable future. If the party doesn't make demonstrable progress in the 1990 elections under these circumstances, it will be a long time before it has this same opportunity again.

Victory in an election is forged from an imprecise and unpredictable combination of factors, many of which sometimes have little to do with the inherent strengths or weak-

nesses of political parties. An extraordinary candidate can raise a minority party to victory and a weak candidate take a majority party to defeat. A Watergate scandal or chance historical event such as the Iran hostage crisis can dominate a campaign in a way that ignores the relative position of the parties. Winning or losing a single election does not always indicate the real appeal of a political party — only long-term trends can do that. If the Republican Party wins the governorship in 1990 it will have an enormously powerful platform from which to build a more competitive party for the 1990s. Winning one election, however, will not itself suffice to rebuild the Republican Party. 🐼

Notes

1. The term “swamp Yankee” refers in Massachusetts to the descendants of the original English colonial settlers, by religion, who neither went to an Ivy League college nor inherited any family money. They tend to be of the working class, artisans or small-business people. Swamp Yankees are distinguished from Brahmin Yankees, who are ethnically and religiously the same but somewhere made money that is passed from generation to generation and went to private schools and Ivy League colleges.
2. J. Joseph Huthmacher, *Massachusetts: People and Politics* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1959), 5.
3. *Ibid.*, 53.
4. *Ibid.*, 260–265.
5. J. W. Farley, general chairman, *Report of the Massachusetts Republican Finance Committee*, 1936.
6. Conversation with Richard Mastrangelo, former executive director of the Republican State Committee.
7. Annual reports of the Republican National Committee, 1976–1980.
8. Farley, *Report of Massachusetts Finance Committee*.
9. Nelson W. Polsby, *Consequences of Party Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 78–80.
10. Data on Massachusetts state fund-raising may be found in the Annual Reports for 1984–1986.
11. All statistical data on election results are taken from Public Document #43 for the years 1976–1988, published by the Massachusetts secretary of state’s office.
12. Theodore H. White, *The Making of the President: 1960* (New York: Atheneum, 1961), 97.

Who Was That Woman I Didn't See You With Last Night?

Norman W. Merrill

The 1988 presidential campaign elicited numerous complaints about negative campaigning. But compared to the vicious rhetoric popular at the birth of the republic the rhetoric of the latest campaign was quite mild. Invective rhetoric was employed by the Founding Fathers, men like John Adams, Alexander Hamilton, and James Callender. The partisan press of the time contributed greatly to the harsh tone of politics. All participants felt free to make acerbic remarks directed at the man rather than the issue, a tradition that continued throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. Many of the charges made by American politicians were similar to allegations by politicians of the Roman republic. Since there was no invective tradition in European politics, it seems likely that American politicians were inspired by Roman models. Such attacks were generally lacking in veracity but obviously effected some political end or they would not have been employed for so long. The advent of a more responsible press in the twentieth century tamed the wild, freewheeling invective tradition considerably but did not kill it.

During the 1988 presidential election campaign, observers on all sides complained about negative campaigning and the vicious, derisive, and generally harsh tone of the candidates' speeches. In point of fact, the 1988 campaign, and most of the presidential campaigns of the twentieth century, have been relatively mild in manner when compared with those conducted during the first century of our republic. That is not to say that truly vicious things have not been said in modern times, for the ad hominem argument remains popular, but compared to campaigns conducted in the early years of the nation, modern election campaigns are relatively tame and focus on issues. How biting is the charge that Michael Dukakis was a "card-carrying member of the ACLU" in comparison with these statements made by Davy Crockett about Martin Van Buren.

And this is plain to every thinking man, because they must see that Van Buren is as opposite to General Jackson as dung is to diamond. Jackson is open, bold, warm-hearted, confiding, and passionate to a fault. Van Buren is secret, sly, selfish, cold, calculating, distrustful, treacherous; and if he could gain an object just as well by openness as intrigue, he would choose the latter.

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[Van Buren] is so stiff in his gait, and prim in his dress, that he is what the English call a dandy. When he enters the senate-chamber in the morning, he struts and swaggers like a crow in a gutter. He is laced up in corsets, such as women in town wear, and, if possible, tighter than the best of them. It was difficult to say, from his personal appearance, whether he was a man or woman, but for his large red and gray whiskers.¹

That is negative campaigning!

Our forefathers indulged in such abusive attacks as a matter of course. Hardly a presidential candidate escaped the scathing comments of his opponent. Indeed, the bigger the issues, the harsher the rhetoric became. Horace Greeley remarked, after a particularly vitriolic race against Ulysses S. Grant, that he didn't know if he had run for the presidency or the penitentiary.² The origin of abusing one's political enemies rhetorically and what sources this tradition drew on is the focus of this article.

The invective tradition in American political rhetoric is as old as the American Revolution itself. Inflammatory oratory was a stock-in-trade for men like Patrick Henry and Samuel Adams. The great debate about the nature of the Constitution between the Federalists and anti-Federalists was acrimonious. The party system began to evolve during George Washington's presidency, and with its emergence came an increasingly strident rhetoric.

In 1792 supporters of Thomas Jefferson began to attack the fiscal policies of Alexander Hamilton in *The National Gazette*. Hamilton, never willing to accept criticism gracefully, responded in the *Federalist Gazette of the United States*. The polemical nature of this debate seems to have contributed substantially to the growth of the ad hominem argument in American political life. Many writers of the post-Revolutionary era adopted names from the ancient world when contributing to the constitutional debate and subsequent pamphleteering. Often they chose names that were appropriate to their political stance. Brutus and Cato were popular pseudonyms for staunch Republicans, while others used names of politicians of the ancient world like Aristides, Metellus, and Camillus, to name a few. Hamilton's choice of the name Catallus to respond to his critic is quite revelatory. Catallus was a Roman poet, not a statesman, known for his passionate love poetry and his bitter, often obscene attacks on his rivals and enemies. Many of Hamilton's attacks on Jefferson are worthy of his Roman namesake.

The conflict over Hamilton's fiscal policies faded, but the remaining years of the decade provided many crises that produced more venom, especially between Hamilton and John Adams, who had succeeded Washington in 1796. The two men had disliked one another for many years, and the irascible, acid-tongued Adams did not respond well to Hamilton's constant suggestions about how to conduct the public business.³ The final rupture came in 1799, when Adams nominated William Vans Murray to negotiate with France instead of declaring war, as Hamilton and other Federalists wished. Disgusted with Adams, Hamilton penned a letter to certain Federalist friends entitled "The Public Conduct and Character of John Adams, Esq., President of the United States." In it Hamilton harshly criticized Adams's conduct of his presidency and strongly urged that the Federalist Party choose Charles Pinckney as its candidate. Through the agency of Aaron Burr, this letter was widely circulated, causing serious problems for the Federalists in the election of 1800. In this case the polemical approach backfired badly.

Nor was Adams shy about using strong, direct language with reference to his enemies. He had a quick temper and the four years of the presidency often pushed him to the breaking point. On one occasion, in May 1800, just prior to firing James McHenry, his secretary of war, Adams had an outburst about Hamilton, declaring, "He is an intrigant, the

greatest intriguer in the world — a man devoid of every moral principle — a bastard and as much a foreigner as Gallatin.”⁴ Adams never forgave Hamilton for his machinations. In his *Autobiography*, written many years after Hamilton’s death, Adams wrote of Hamilton:

Although I have long since forgiven this Arch Enemy, yet Vice, Folly and Villany are not to be forgotten, because the guilty Wretch repented, in his dying Moments. Although David repented, We are no where commanded to forget the Affair of Uriah: though the Magdalene reformed, We are not obliged to forget her former Vocation: though the Thief upon the cross was converted, his Felony is still upon record. The Prodigal Son repented and was forgiven, yet his Harlots and riotous living, and even the Swine and the husks that brought him to consideration, cannot be forgotten. Nor am I obliged by any Principles of Morality or Religion to suffer my Character to lie under infamous Calumnies, because the Author of them, with a Pistol Bullet through his Spinal Marrow, died a Penitent . . . I will not conceal his former Character at the Expence of so much Injustice to my own, as this Scottish Creolion Bolingbroke in the days of his disappointed Ambition and unbridled Malice and revenge, was pleased falsely to attempt against it.⁵

Adams clearly got in the last word in this splendid piece of invective. The bitterness of Hamilton’s actions had not faded much, and Adams was not afraid to express his feelings openly as few others could or would do.

Thus, in the first decade of the new republic, a tradition of harsh rhetoric often directed at one’s opponent rather than the issues flourished. The bitter personal enmities between Hamilton, Adams, Jefferson, and their supporters became an integral part of the political scene and appeared in a very public forum. A rough and ready political tradition had arisen, one which future politicians and campaigners would feel free to use.

The abusive tradition in American political rhetoric did not spring full blown from the minds of the politicians of the post-Revolutionary period. Indeed, many of the accusations and charges are similar to those used by the Roman orators of the late republic. An examination of the allegations made by American politicians and those of the late Roman republic reveals some interesting parallels. Romans enjoyed hearing about the shameful behavior of their public figures much as Americans do. Moreover, Romans considered personal attacks a necessary part of political rhetoric. The eminent Roman historian Ronald Syme remarked in *The Roman Revolution*:

In the Rome of the Republic, not constrained by any laws of libel, the literature of politics was seldom dreary, hypocritical, or edifying. Persons, not programmes, came before the people for their judgement and approbation . . . The best of arguments was political abuse. In the allegation of disgusting immorality, degrading pursuits and ignoble origin the Roman politician knew no compunction or limit.⁶

Indeed, Syme’s comments could easily have come from an American history text. American politicians from the earliest period used similar accusations. It is not surprising that Americans have adopted charges similar to those of their Roman counterparts. Classical languages and ancient history were the backbone of the early American curriculum. Young scholars read the speeches of Cicero, a brilliant orator, skilled politician, and master of invective. Adams mentions the virtues of reading Cicero frequently in his *Diaries*, and Hamilton invokes his name in his series of essays signed Tully.⁷ In fact, the foundation of our republic evolved from a careful study of Greek and Roman government. Even a casual examination of *The Federalist* reveals that the Founding Fathers turned constantly

to the ancients to find a suitable model for the new government, suggesting that they may also have been inspired by the classical models when they attacked their political opponents. American political rhetoric abounds with allusions to Roman historical figures. An examination of passages from Cicero and his predecessors reveals some interesting parallels between the ancient Romans and our political predecessors. Roman rhetorical attacks tend to be more graphic and dramatic than American ones, while American attacks more often occur in the form of slogans, songs, or editorials, but the parallels are clear. How much truth is involved in any of the allegations is debatable, whether we are dealing with American or Roman politicians. The intention of invective rhetoric is to sway the audience to a certain point of view, not necessarily to tell the truth. James Bryce, a British historian, wrote in *The American Commonwealth*:

It is therefore an easy task for the unscrupulous passions which a contest rouses to gather up rumors, piece out old though unproved stories of corruption, put the worse meaning on doubtful words, and so construct a damning impeachment, which will be read in party journals by many voters who never see the defence. The worst of this habit of universal invective is that the plain citizen, hearing much which he cannot believe, finding the foul imputations brought even against those he has reason to respect, despairs of sifting the evidence in any given case.⁸

A common accusation in both Roman and American politics was that the opposition was seeking monarchy or some other form of despotism. This charge suited the political structure of each nation. The Romans had expelled their last king in 509 B.C. and established a republican form of government; Americans had done the same in 1776. Hatred of kings and those with regal aspirations was a common bond to the nations that believed in liberty (a Roman concept) and republican government.

Cato the Elder, a model of Roman puritanism, honesty, and severity, delivered this attack on a Roman magistrate who had illegally flogged some local magistrates for a petty offense:

He said that the local grain supply had not been adequately attended to by the decemvirs. He ordered their clothes to be taken off and the men to be flogged. The Bruttiani flogged the decemvirs, many men witnessed. Who can endure this insult? Who this abuse of power? Who this slavery? No king dared to do this?⁹

Over three hundred years after the expulsion of the kings, a Roman politician is accusing a magistrate of behaving more imperiously than a king.

A century and a half later, Cicero attacked Mark Antony for his regal aspirations.

Marcus Antonius alone since the founding of the city openly surrounded himself with armed guards — a thing which neither our kings did, nor did those who wished to seize power illegally after the kings had been expelled. I remember Cinna; I saw Sulla; and likewise Caesar: these three after the state had been freed by Lucius Brutus were more powerful than the entire republic. None did this.¹⁰

American politicians also used the names of Caesar and Sulla as archetypal ancient tyrants and Cromwell and Napoleon as modern tyrannical paradigms. Virtually no Roman politician escaped this charge in the last two hundred years of the republic. Cicero himself was charged with behaving like a king and briefly exiled.

American politicians were quick to say that members of the opposition were behaving in a kingly manner or would like to become king. George Washington, who had rejected

the idea of receiving a crown, was nonetheless accused of behaving like a king. There were whispers that his carriage drawn by six horses was like that of George III. At the end of his presidency he was referred to as the American Caesar and Nero.¹¹ There were dark rumors about the monarchical aim of both Hamilton and Jefferson throughout the 1790s. Writing of the appointment of Hamilton as second in command to Commander in Chief Washington, John Adams declared:

With all the vanity and timidity of Cicero, all the debauchery of Marc Antony and all the ambition of Julius Caesar, his object was the command of fifty thousand men. My object was the defense of my country, and that alone, which I knew could be affected only by a navy.¹²

In the election campaign of 1796, supporters of Jefferson rewrote the words of “Yankee Doodle” to mock the supposed regal ambitions of John Adams:

See Johnny at the helm of State,
Head itching for a crown,
He longs to be, like Georgy, great,
And pull Tom Jeffer downy.

Adams was perceived throughout the campaign as an avowed supporter of the monarchy. Critics claimed that Adams planned to marry one of his sons to a daughter of George III to start an American royal family, a plan supposedly halted only by three visits from George Washington.¹³ His son, John Quincy Adams, was dubbed King John II.

In the 1832 campaign between Henry Clay and Andrew Jackson, Jackson was frequently called King Andy, a charge that stemmed from Jackson’s opposition to the National Bank. Supporters of Clay used the slogan “The king upon the throne: The people in the dust.”¹⁴ Jackson was also styled King Andrew the First King of Kings. Cartoonists depicted him in royal robes, trampling the Constitution under his feet. The *Portland (Maine) Daily Advertiser* attacked Jackson’s kingly aspirations, alluding to the great despots of the past:

Is the president preparing for a crown by cajoling us with the prospect of an equal division of goods — by offering his aid to overturn the rights of property, to humble the wealthy, and to put down the exalted? If so, we ask, which is worth the most, monarchy, despotism, the tyranny of one man — or honorable poverty, and the present enjoyment of a constitution and laws which throw the field of exertion wide open to industry, energy, and economy? Let it be remembered that every military chieftain, Sulla, Caesar, Cromwell, all have obtained unlimited and despotic power by pretending to be the sole friends of the People.¹⁵

Note that the editorial specifically cited two Roman tyrants, both of whom were alleged to have regal aims. These tactics didn’t work, and Jackson was elected despite the accusations. Jackson’s “kingly” behavior was not entirely forgotten, however, and his hand-picked successor, Van Buren, was dubbed King Martin the First.

Abraham Lincoln was a logical target for such charges during the years 1861–1865, when both South and North attacked his tyrannical aims. First, from the *Charleston Mercury*, March 9, 1861:

King Lincoln — Rail splitter Abraham — Emperor! We thank thee for this. It is the tocsin of battle, but it is the signal of our freedom. Quickly, oh quickly begin the fray. Haste to levy tribute. “Enforce the laws” with all possible speed! . . . O low-born, despicable tyrant, that the price of liberty will be paid.

That is invective and a call to liberty worthy of Cicero! Northern newspapers were frequently no more charitable toward Lincoln. The *Bangor Democrat*, April 18, 1861, blasted Lincoln in the following terms:

Yes, Abraham Lincoln, a Tory from his birth, is putting forth all the powers of Government to crush out the spirit of American liberty. Surrounded by gleaming swords and glistening bayonets at Washington, he sends forth fleets and armies to overawe and subdue that gallant little state which was the first to raise its voice and arm against British oppression.

It is rather entertaining to see the prairie-born log splitter portrayed as a member of the British Tory party, crushing out the light of liberty, a feat the original Tories had been incapable of doing.

During the Reconstruction period President Andrew Johnson was named, as was Jackson before him, King Andrew the First. Gradually, however, as the republic began to seem reasonably safe from those interested in assuming monarchical power, accusations of imperious or despotic behavior became less popular. Though the memory of rule by English kings was in the dim past and accusations of tyrannical behavior no longer swayed the electorate, in moments of severe constitutional stress such charges did periodically recur. When Franklin D. Roosevelt attempted to pack the Supreme Court in 1937, the *New York Herald Tribune* editorialized:

No President of the United States ever before made the least gesture toward attempting to gain such a vast grant of power . . . It was a French King, Louis XIV, who said, “L’état, c’est moi” — “I am the State.” The paper shell of American constitutionalism would continue if President Roosevelt secured the passage of the law he now demands. But it would be only a shell.¹⁶

Although this is a more sophisticated attack than those of a century earlier, the allusion to Louis XIV, a model absolute monarch, is clearly intended to warn its readers about Roosevelt’s aims. Roosevelt’s decision to run for an unprecedented third term in 1940 brought many unflattering accusations about his real motives. One headline read WALLACE PRAISES DICTATORS, SLAMS PRIESTS IN BOOK MS. The article below began:

Many people will be surprised to learn that Henry A. Wallace, Roosevelt candidate for the vice-presidency, once praised Dictators Lenin, Stalin, and Mussolini, and repeated religious criticisms which are certain to horrify many good Christian Americans.

Other anonymous signs and slogans appeared with messages such as:

Save Your Church!
Dictators Hate Religion
Vote Straight Republican

and

3rd Term
3rd Reich
3rd Internationale¹⁷

In more recent times, John F. Kennedy, Richard Nixon, and Ronald Reagan have been charged with having “imperial presidencies.” Cartoonists have also portrayed many re-

cent presidents in imperial garb, but fortunately campaigns of the last forty years have provoked few severe constitutional crises that raised questions about any candidate's regal ambitions.

Another *ad hominem* argument popular with both Roman and American politicians was that one's opponent had engaged in some form of immorality, especially inappropriate sexual behavior or association with disreputable companions. For Romans, who were publicly quite puritanical, such companions included prostitutes of both sexes, actors, Greeks, and dancers. American politicians seem to favor illicit affairs with women of lower status.

Cato the Censor sought to have former consul Lucius Quinctius Flaminius expelled from the Senate in 184 B.C. because of his immorality. One of the incidents Cato cited in support of his removal was an episode of cruelty and immorality that occurred when Flaminius was serving as pro-consul in Gaul. This is Cato's version.

He reproached Flaminius because he had brought Philip the Carthaginian, a notorious and expensive prostitute, who was induced by the hope of great gifts, with him from Rome into Gaul. This boy, playfully mocking the consul, was often accustomed to complain that just at the time of the gladiatorial games he had been taken from Rome in submission to his lover. By chance they were banqueting and flushed with wine when it was announced that a Gallic deserter of noble status had come to the banquet with his children who had wished to meet the consul and receive his promise of protection face to face. He was led into the tent and began to speak to the consul through an interpreter. In the middle of his speech, Flaminius said to his prostitute, "Do you wish, since you missed the gladiatorial shows, to see this Gaul die here now?" When the boy nodded yes, not taking him too seriously, the consul drew his sword, which was hanging above his head, and struck the Gaul in the head while he was still speaking.¹⁸

Cato masterfully brings out the sense of outrage. A holder of the highest magistracy of the republic, drunk, in a couch with a Carthaginian whore, murders a noble man seeking refuge and the protection of the Roman people. The Romans had just finished a twenty-year war with Carthage and the pro-consul is consorting with a Carthaginian whore. Such an attack would have had a profound impact on the audience.

Let us look at two similar allegations of shameful immorality brought by Cicero more than one hundred years later. In the first passage, Cicero is prosecuting Verres, the corrupt governor of Sicily, in the year 70 B.C. According to Cicero, Verres allowed justice to be administered at his house by Chelidon, his favorite prostitute.

A Roman knight, Caius Mustius, a man noted for his integrity, went to Chelidon. With him went Marcus Junius, a very honest and pure man. Oh, your praetorship was bitter, miserable, and unworthy for many people! I will pass over the other things, but with what great shame, with what great sorrow do you think that such men came to the house of a prostitute? Men who would never, under any condition, have undergone such a disgrace unless the reasons of duty and kinship had forced them, came, as I said, to Chelidon. The house was full. New laws, new decrees, new judgements were sought. The house was crowded not with an assembly of whores, but rather with people seeking justice. Mustius spoke, explained the situation, sought help, offered a bribe. That prostitute answered in a civilized manner and said she would gladly help.¹⁹

Cicero masterfully underscores the shame and outrage of this situation. The legal affairs of the whole island of Sicily are managed not by the praetor Verres, the man whom Rome

had sent to administer the legal system, but by a prostitute, albeit a most civilized one. Honest citizens, who would ordinarily never go near such a shameful place, are forced to go to a prostitute to gain justice.

Almost thirty years later, Cicero attacked Mark Antony for his shamelessness:

The tribune of the plebs [Antony] was riding in a Gallic chariot. Lictors wearing laurel wreaths preceded him, among whom carried on an open litter was a mime whom the decent townspeople from the neighboring towns who unavoidably happened to meet her greeted her not by that well-known mime name, but as Volumnia. A wagon full of pimps followed, the most disgusting comrades; his scorned mother followed the girl friend of her shameless son like a daughter-in-law.²⁰

The tribune was the people's representative in the Roman government. Here he is riding in a Gallic chariot instead of on horseback, as a proper magistrate would. And what comprises the retinue of this elected representative of the people: a female mime, protected by the laurel-wreathed lictors, military attendants who ordinarily accompanied only the highest magistrates of the Roman republic and carried before them the fasces, symbolic of the government's authority, a wagon loaded with pimps, and finally his mother, who should have had the place of honor near her son, brings up the rear of this shameful parade. The female mime was synonymous with prostitute for the Roman audience. Volumnia, the name of an old Roman family, was therefore not an appropriate name for a mime. In addition, she is carried on a litter as if she were a proper Roman matron, and the fact that the litter is open only adds to the disgraceful nature of the procession.

American politicians from the beginning of the republic have delighted in regaling audiences with the real or imagined indiscretions of their leaders. The American sense of indignation and outrage is not generally as vehement as that of Roman politicians, for Americans tended more to the comic or satiric side of the issues.

Alexander Hamilton had an affair with a married woman named Reynolds. Her husband blackmailed Hamilton until 1796, when fellow Federalists forced Hamilton to publish a forty-page document, *The Reynolds Pamphlet*, which disclosed details of the affair, defended his own behavior, and lashed out at his accusers in the characteristic Hamilton manner. Before 1792, however, Hamilton had been one of the most vigorous assailants of the immorality of others. In his pamphlet he never really apologized for his behavior, but rather tried to portray himself as a victim of the "conspiracy of vice against virtue":

Relying upon the weakness of human nature, the Jacobin Scandal-Club, though often defeated, constantly returns to the charge. Old calumnies are served up afresh, and every pretext is seized to add to the catalogue. The person whom they seek to blacken, by dint of repeated strokes of their brush, becomes a demon in their own eyes, though he might be pure and bright as an angel but for the daubing of those wizard painters.²¹

So much for apology. Hamilton had admitted his guilt and the blackmail, yet somehow "the Jacobin Scandal-Club" and its "wizards" (Jefferson and friends) were responsible for his problems. Madison wrote to Jefferson in October 1797 about Hamilton's pamphlet.

Next to the error of publishing it at all, is that of forgetting that simplicity and candour are the only dress which prudence would put on innocence. Here we see every rhetorical artifice employed to excite the spirit of party to prop up his sinking reputation; and whilst the most exaggerated complaints are uttered against the unfair persecution of himself, he deals out in every page the most malignant insinuations against others. The

one against you is a masterpiece of folly, because its impotence is in exact proportion to its venom.²²

Here, early in the American political tradition, American politicians are using the immorality of their opponents as fertile ground for political attack, much as the Romans had millennia earlier. John Adams also remarked on “the profligacy of [Hamilton’s] life; his fornications, adulteries and his incests.”²³ Clearly Adams is employing the same style of attack that Hamilton and others practiced. Such influential men obviously set the tone for their successors.

Adams was also attacked with a rather amusing charge of immorality. Republicans claimed that he had sent General Charles Pinckney to England on an American frigate to procure four pretty girls as mistresses, two for Adams and two for Pinckney. When the usually choleric Adams heard this accusation, he laughed and claimed that Pinckney had obviously kept all four girls and cheated him of two.

Jefferson suffered from similar slanderous allegations about his immoral behavior. During his presidency one James Callender, a man who had the tacit support of Jefferson and his partisans in his attacks on Hamilton and Adams in the early 1790s, turned against Jefferson and alleged that he kept one of his female slaves, Sally Hemings, as a mistress and was the father of some of her children. Facts had never deterred Callender in the past and he spread the stories about “Dusky Sally” throughout the Federalist press. In 1808 thirteen-year-old poet William Cullen Bryant, angered, like so many New Englanders, by Jefferson’s embargo, penned a five-hundred-line poem, “The Embargo,” which contained the lines

Go wretch, resign the presidential chair,
Disclose thy secret measures, foul or fair.
Go, search with curious eye, for horned frogs,
Mid the wild wastes of Louisiana bogs;
Or, where Ohio rolls his turbid stream,
Dig for huge bones, thy glory and thy theme.
Go, scan, Philosophist, [Sally’s] charms
And sink supinely in her sable arms;
But quit to abler hands the helm of the state,
Nor image ruin on thy country’s fate.²⁴

In the same poem Bryant also referred to Jefferson as a Cromwell. A poet from the *Boston Gazette* printed the following verses to be sung to “Yankee Doodle”:

Of all the damsels on the green,
On mountain, or in valley
A lass so luscious ne’er was seen,
As the Monticellian Sally.
Yankey Doodle, who’s the noodle?
What wife were half so handy?
To breed a flock of slaves for stock,
A blackamoor’s the dandy.²⁵

Many other similar poems and songs circulated thanks to Callender and his Federalist friends. Jefferson stayed out of the furor as much as possible during his two terms.

Enemies of John Quincy Adams attacked him for several alleged indiscretions. He was said to have enjoyed premarital sex with his wife. He purportedly had procured an American serving girl for the Russian czar when on a diplomatic assignment to Russia, a charge

that harkens back to Cicero's complaint about pimps who followed Mark Antony. The *Natchez Gazette* made the following comment on Adams after his election:

The courtly voluptuary, refined in all the stratagems of sensuality, the privileged libertine at whose approach innocence trembles and the blushing cheek grows pale, who considers virtue as the *ignis fatuus* of imagination and health and happiness as his lawful prey, the deceitful diplomatist, the fawning sycophant, the superannuated beggar.²⁶

Modern scholars generally agree that such portrayals of the puritan, patrician Adams are considerably exaggerated.

Over the next half century the allegations of immorality continued apace. Andrew Jackson was accused of living in sin with his wife Rachel because of some irregularities in her divorce. In the campaign of 1828 anti-Jackson crowds waved banners proclaiming "The ABC's of Democracy — The Adulteress — The Bully — And the Cuckold."²⁷ William Henry Harrison allegedly fathered three children with a Winnebago woman. Lincoln appeared on the battlefield cracking jokes with "his pimps and pets." In the campaign of 1864, a story emerged that Lincoln had an illegitimate daughter. Though untrue, the story was widely disseminated during the campaign. Ulysses S. Grant was also supposed to have fathered an illegitimate daughter by an Indian woman. Of course the immorality of fathering illegitimate children was compounded by racism, as Sally Hemings was black, and Harrison and Grant allegedly chose Indian women. Such accusations, however untrue, must have swayed some voters.

In the campaign of 1883, Grover Cleveland became embroiled in a genuine sex scandal. Well before he appeared on the national scene, Cleveland had fathered an illegitimate child in his home town of Buffalo. Although he assumed financial responsibility for the child and his private immorality had nothing to do with his ability to be president, Republicans, embarrassed by the involvement of their own candidate, James G. Blaine, in a far more serious railroad scandal, seized on Cleveland's sexual indiscretion. The Republican newspapers delighted in excoriating the otherwise honest Cleveland. Charles Dana wrote in the *New York Sun* that "the American people will knowingly elect to the Presidency a coarse debauchee who would bring his harlots with him to Washington and hire lodgings for them convenient to the White House." Other writers branded him as a "libertine," "rake," "a gross and licentious man," "a moral leper," and "worse in moral quality than a pickpocket, a sneak thief, or a Cherry street debauchee, a wretch unworthy of respect or confidence." Republicans were fond of chanting the slogan "Ma! Ma! Where's my pa?"²⁸ Cleveland supporters did get in the last word after the election, however, when they added the refrain "Gone to the White House. Ha! Ha! Ha!" Blaine was also reproached for his alleged immorality. The *Indiana Sentinel* wrote:

There is hardly an intelligent man in the country who has not heard that James G. Blaine betrayed the girl whom he married, and then only married her at the muzzle of a shotgun . . . If, after despoiling her, he was too craven to refuse her legal redress, giving legitimacy to her child, until a loaded shotgun stimulated his conscience — then there is a blot on his character more foul, if possible, than any of the countless stains on his political record.²⁹

These attacks and the multitude of others that assailed both Cleveland and Blaine are quite clearly reminiscent of the attacks made by Cicero and Cato two millennia earlier. It is remarkable to think, in the case of Cleveland, that one private act of immorality many

years earlier, for which he had assumed full responsibility, could have provoked such an emotional uproar, much of which is mere rhetorical hyperbole. In like fashion, the charges against Blaine would appear to be a reciprocal response by Cleveland supporters.

Similar allegations continued to be used in the twentieth century, but they generally lacked the vehemence of the nineteenth-century attacks. Critics attempted to blacken Woodrow Wilson with accusations that he was involved with a Mrs. Peck and had even pushed his wife Ellen downstairs, causing her eventual death.³⁰ Rumors emerged that he had contemplated divorce, that Mrs. Peck had sued for breach of promise, and that a large payoff had been arranged. Wilson was understandably upset by such rumors, but they seemed to have little effect on his successful reelection campaign. Warren G. Harding was a devoted lady's man who had had at least two mistresses, one of whom, Nan Britton, alleged after his death that she had borne him a child. The other, Carrie Phillips, a married woman, took an expense-paid vacation to the Orient during the months of the campaign.

Allegations of immorality as a means of political attack have not been as numerous in the years since World War I, although rumors about John Kennedy's womanizing were rife. The most damaging charge of immorality in recent years was the innocent admission by Jimmy Carter that he had once felt "lust in his heart," quite a comedown from the rhetoric of earlier campaigns. The *ad hominem* argument may have lost some of its charm for the campaigners of the mid to late twentieth century for a variety of reasons. Newspaper reporters have become far more concerned with reporting the truth and scrutinizing the validity of campaign rhetoric. The reporting of the news is also more up to date than it used to be. The press, despite the complaints of modern politicians and observers, is far more trustworthy and less biased than it used to be. Much of the most splendid invective was the direct result of a very partisan press. Partisan newspapers like the *National Gazette*, the *Gazette of the United States*, and Benjamin Franklin Bache's *Aurora* contributed significantly to the harsh tone of politics. In the twentieth century the press has been far more objective. Thus, it is much more difficult for a story that deals with alleged immorality to be published unless it has been thoroughly examined. Libel laws are invoked more often. In more recent times, a candidate who found himself embroiled in a sex scandal, as Gary Hart did, withdrew, so that his behavior was no longer a campaign issue.

A third allegation that found favor with both American and Roman politicians was an attack on the drinking habits of one's opponents. Two outbursts from Cicero demonstrate the vicious tone such attacks could take. Lucius Calpurnius Piso, a member of an old, respected Roman family, a consul in 58 B.C., had been a friend of Cicero's until 58 B.C., when he supported Cicero's enemies who wanted Cicero exiled. Upon his return from exile in 56 B.C., Cicero delivered a scathing attack on Piso after Piso was charged with corruption in administering his province. Here is how, according to Cicero, Piso behaved while holding the highest office in the state.

Who saw you sober in those days? Who saw you doing anything which was worthy of a free man? Finally who ever saw you in public? When the house of your [co-consul] resounded with cymbals and song, when he himself danced naked at this party in which while he twirled his dancer's hoop, he did not fear the wheel of fortune. Piso, himself neither so consummate a glutton nor so musical, lay in the stench and filth of his Greek friends. This disgraceful party of yours happened in those struggling times for the republic just like the battle of the Lapiths and Centaurs. No one could tell whether Piso himself drank or vomited more.³¹

In such a manner did Piso conduct his official duties. The drinking, the dancing, and the Greek friends were all charges calculated to stir the anger of the audience. Romans frowned on dancing. They despised the Greeks as a silly, frivolous race and certainly had no use for heavy drinking by public officials at private parties, especially when the republic was undergoing such political turmoil. Yet Cicero rebuked Mark Antony even more harshly thirteen years later. Antony held the office of master of the horse, the man in charge of the army during a political crisis. Here is how he conducted himself on one occasion.

You with that throat of yours, with those flanks, with that gladiatorial strength of your whole body, had drunk so much wine at the wedding of Hippias that it was necessary for you to vomit in the sight of the Roman people on the following day — an act not only foul to see but even to hear about. If this had happened to you during dinner when you were drinking those immense drinks, who would not think it shameful. In the assembly of the Roman people while conducting public duties, master of the horse, who shouldn't even belch, you vomited up wine mixed with stinking bits of food, filling your lap and the whole platform.³²

Once again, Cicero lambasts a public official for his disgraceful drunkenness, and for revealing its aftermath to the entire Roman people. Compounding the disgrace was the fact that Hippias was a Greek mime, a totally inappropriate companion for a Roman magistrate. Behavior like Antony's would be shameful at a private dinner party, but in a public meeting, while acting on official business, such behavior was unspeakable. Such attacks on Antony were not without cost to Cicero. In 43 B.C., Antony's men caught up with Cicero's party on the road and as Cicero put his head out of the coach, he was beheaded.

Accusations of drunkenness have become a standard part of the rhetorical repertoire of American politicians as well. American society has always considered the consumption of spirits somewhat sinful. Thus, allegations that certain candidates drank more than they should appealed to the puritanical side of the American electorate.

Allegations of drunkenness arose in the early campaigns of the nineteenth century. Supporters of John Quincy Adams attacked Jackson's drinking habits. When William Henry Harrison ran in 1840, a friend of Henry Clay's remarked of Harrison, "Give him a barrel of hard cider and a pension of two thousand a year and, my word for it, he will sit the remainder of his days in a log cabin, by the side of a sea-coal fire and study moral philosophy."³³ A popular campaign song ran as follows:

Hush-a-bye-baby;
Daddy's a Whig,
Before he comes home
Hard cider he'll swig;

Then he'll be Topsy
And over he'll fall;
Down will come Daddy
Tip, Tyler and all.³⁴

Adroit Whig campaign managers managed to turn Harrison's enjoyment of hard cider into a positive issue by contrasting the simple drinking habits of Harrison to the "luxurious" living style of the incumbent Van Buren, who drank champagne.

James Polk was pilloried as a drunkard and a coward who had fainted away and fallen from his horse in battle. His opponent in the campaign of 1844, Henry Clay, was accused

of violating every sin in the Decalogue. One pamphlet proclaimed, “The history of Mr. Clay’s debaucheries and midnight revelries in Washington is too shocking, too disgusting to appear in print.”³⁵ Quite a claim when one considers what was routinely appearing in print at the time. Another pamphlet claimed, “Clay spends his days at the gambling tables and his nights in brothels, [and always carries] a pistol, a pack of cards, and a brandy-bottle.”³⁶ Franklin Pierce, who apparently did have an actual drinking problem, was referred to as “the hero of many a well-fought bottle.” When John C. Fremont ran in 1856, he was falsely charged with being a drunkard.

Andrew Johnson committed an indiscretion similar to that of Mark Antony, apparently showing up at the inauguration of 1865 tipsy. Local comedians found this story highly amusing and parodied him as follows:

. . . inspired of many a pot,
Which made him drunk as any sot,
At the inauguration.

Oh, was it not a glorious sight
To see the crowd of black and white
As well as Andrew Johnson tight
At the inauguration.³⁷

Johnson was never allowed to forget the unfortunate episode. The *New York World* said harshly that Johnson was “an insolent, drunken brute, in comparison with whom Caligula’s horse was reputable.”³⁸ Once again, an American journalist alludes to Roman politics to defame a politician. Caligula, surely one of the most depraved men ever to rule Rome, once appointed his horse as consul. Poor Johnson is then more unworthy a political creature than the horse that once shared Rome’s highest office.

Grover Cleveland, mercilessly lashed in the campaign of 1884, suffered more indignities in the subsequent campaign. He was called the “Beast of Buffalo” who got drunk regularly and beat his wife (he had married his ward, Frances Folsom, in 1886). Mrs. Cleveland finally issued a statement declaring that the charges were “without a shadow of foundation.”

A rather amusing anecdote emerged about William Jennings Bryan, a teetotaler who frequently showed up for speeches smelling “like a wrecked distillery.”³⁹ Finally the truth came out. Bryan thought that gin was a fine deodorant and was accustomed to wash himself and his clothes with it.

The last politician whose drinking habits became an issue, with good reason, was Theodore Roosevelt. The enthusiastic manner of the naturally effusive and ebullient Roosevelt led people to believe he drank heavily. Reporters delighted in recording that Roosevelt drank excessively. One reporter in Butte, Montana, reported that TR had consumed fourteen highballs during a fifteen-minute interview. In 1912, the following lines appeared in the periodical *Iron Age*: “He lies and curses in a most disgusting way. He gets drunk, too, and that not infrequently, and all his intimates know about it.”⁴⁰ Roosevelt, who was actually a very light drinker, sued for libel and won, putting reporters and politicians on notice to be more careful in the future. Discussions of the drinking habits of one’s political opponents have not been too evident since TR’s suit.

These three categories of political attack are by no means the only common ground between Roman and American politicians, who derided the luxurious habits of their opponents, their ignoble origins, and their racial background, among other things. Personal

attack covers a wide ground, and both republics allowed their citizens wide latitude to abuse their political opponents. Both cultures evidently enjoyed the freewheeling rhetoric. This custom did not come from British politics. Bryce says in *The American Commonwealth*:

A presidential election in America is something to which Europe can show nothing similar. Though issues which fall to be decided by election of a Chamber in France or Italy, or of a House of Commons in England, are often far graver than those involved in the choice of A or B to be executive chief magistrate for four years, the commotion and excitement, the amount of "organization," of speaking, writing, telegraphing, and shouting is incomparably greater in the United States.⁴¹

The parallels make it clear that just as our constitutional form of government was derived from Greek and Roman models, so too the methods employed by politicians in gaining elective office were inspired by classical rhetorical models. Who better to turn to than the masters of the past to insult and defame opponents of the present? Thus, in many ways our campaign rhetoric, despite what we may feel about negative campaigning, is more temperate now than it ever has been. 🐼

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Notes

1. David Crockett, *The Life of Martin Van Buren* (Philadelphia: Robert Wright, 1837), 13, 80–81.
2. Paul Boller, *Presidential Campaigns* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 129.
3. Joseph Charles, *The Origins of the American Party System* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 59.
4. Page Smith, *John Adams* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1962), vol. 2, 1027–1028.
5. John Adams, *Autobiography*, in *The Adams Papers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), vol. 3, 434–435.
6. Ronald Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 149.
7. John Adams, *Diaries*, in *The Adams Papers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), vol. 2, 251–252. Tully, the regular name for Cicero in the eighteenth century, was derived from his nomen Tullius. In the third essay, which he signed Tully, Hamilton quotes a line from the opening of Cicero's famous *First Catilinarian Oration*: "How long, ye Catilines, will ye abuse our patience?" Virtually every educated reader would recognize the line and understand the allusion to Catiline, a man who tried to overthrow the Roman republic in 63 B.C.
8. James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth* (London: Macmillan, 1891), vol. 2, 210.
9. Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, 10. 3. 19.
10. Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Philippics*, 5. 17.
11. Thomas Bailey, *Voices of America* (New York: Free Press, 1976), 34–35.
12. John Adams to Adrian Van Der Kemp, April 25, 1808.
13. Page Smith, *The Shaping of America: A People's History of the Young Republic* (New York: Penguin Books, 1989), 279–281.
14. Boller, *Campaigns*, 55.
15. Quoted in the *National Intelligencer* (Washington, D.C.), August 2, 1832, 2.

16. *New York Herald Tribune*, February 6, 1937.
17. Hugh A. Bone, "*Smear*" *Politics: An Analysis of 1940 Campaign Literature* (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Public Affairs, 1941), 17.
18. Livy, 39. 42.
19. Cicero, *Verrine Orations*, I. 137.
20. Cicero, *Philippics*, 2. 58.
21. Alexander Hamilton, *The Reynolds Pamphlet*, in *The Works of Alexander Hamilton*, ed. Henry Cabot Lodge (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1908), vol. 7, 377.
22. James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, October 20, 1797, in *Letters and Other Writings of James Madison* (Philadelphia: J. P. Lippincott, 1865), vol. 2, 119.
23. Samuel Hopkins Adams, "Presidential Campaign Slanders," *Life*, October 2, 1944, 53.
24. William Cullen Bryant, "The Embargo," ed. Thomas O. Mabbott (Gainesville, Fla.: Scholars' Facsimiles, 1955), lines 111–120.
25. Dumas Malone, *Jefferson the President* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1970), 214. Malone devotes an entire chapter to a discussion of the slanders of Callender and others on Jefferson.
26. S. H. Adams, "Campaign Slanders," 54.
27. Boller, *Campaigns*, 46–50.
28. *Ibid.*, 148–150.
29. *Ibid.*, 152.
30. *Ibid.*, 209.
31. Cicero, *In Pisonem*, 22.
32. Cicero, *Philippics*, 2. 63.
33. Boller, *Campaigns*, 66.
34. *Ibid.*, 75.
35. *Ibid.*, 80.
36. *Ibid.*
37. S. H. Adams, "Campaign Slanders," 57.
38. *Ibid.*
39. Boller, *Campaigns*, 175.
40. *Ibid.*, 199.
41. Bryce, *American Commonwealth*, vol. 2, 196.

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JFK: The Education of a President

Nigel Hamilton

What goes into the making of a president? To what extent are the mind and character of the American commander in chief determined by his background, his family — and his education? This article represents a transcript of two lectures Nigel Hamilton presented in the spring and fall of 1989 at the Massachusetts State Archives. They were derived from the preliminary sketches for the author's full-scale biography of John F. Kennedy, to be published by Houghton Mifflin in 1992 on the anniversary of the birth of the thirty-fifth president.

Many are called, but few are chosen.” That is without a doubt a good description of how hard it is to get into heaven. But I’ve often thought it an apt reference to the White House.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy was, after all, only the thirty-fifth man in almost three hundred years to reach the Oval Office — in the twentieth century, between the election of President William McKinley in November 1896 and Kennedy’s own election in 1960, only nine men occupied the White House!

I suppose a statistician could give us an interesting assessment of the odds against John F. Kennedy’s becoming President Kennedy when he was born; but if we think that between the election of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1932 and Kennedy’s own election almost three decades later there were but *two* other presidents, we have some idea of this veritable “eye of the needle” through which he passed.

Given these odds, is it not therefore of intrinsic interest to know more about the formative years in the lives of those men who *have* reached the top — to know, in the case of John F. Kennedy, more about his family background and the schooling he received — his first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh schooling, first, second, third, fourth college . . .

It’s remarkable how much a man can go to school — or how many schools he actually attends in the course of his education — and Jack Kennedy was no exception. Not too

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much attention has been paid in the past to Kennedy's schooling, yet this was the man who would become the youngest elected president in American history, and the first Catholic to achieve that office!

Forgive me then if, as a foreigner, I explore with you a period in John F. Kennedy's life which, when seen from afar, amounts to no less than the education of a president. To my mind it is worth investigating for that reason alone. If it's a story that's well known to you, I can only apologize. If it's not, I hope I can share with you some of the fascination I've found in my biographical research.

First, let's be clear about dates. That John Fitzgerald Kennedy was born in the front bedroom at 83 Beals Street, Brookline, at 3:00 P.M., following unseasonably stormy weather, on May 29, 1917, is undisputed. That his father was employed in important war work at the time, as he and his wife, Rose, later claimed, is not true.

On April 2, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson had asked Congress for approval of his intention to declare war on Germany. Four days later, the Senate and the House of Representatives having given their assent, the president had signed the official declaration.

In courting the support of Congress, after Germany's own declaration of unrestricted submarine warfare on any vessel approaching Great Britain or the Entente Allies in the Mediterranean, President Wilson noted what a fearful thing it was

to lead this great peaceful people into war, the most terrible of all wars. But the right is more precious than the peace, and we shall fight for the things that we have always carried nearest our hearts — for democracy . . . for the rights and liberties of small nations, for a universal dominion of right by such a concert of free people as shall bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world at last free. To such a task we can dedicate our lives and our fortunes, everything that we are and everything that we have, with the pride of those who know that the day has come when America is privileged to spend her blood and her might for the principles that gave her birth. . . . God helping her, she can do no other.

Six senators and fifty congressmen objected. And in Boston, the country's youngest bank president — albeit of a small Boston-Irish bank — also objected, at least to the spilling of his own blood, the dedicating of his life, or the risking of his fortune.

The truth was that Joseph Patrick Kennedy, though a bank president in title, had no fortune. His personal wealth in 1917 is listed in the Brookline tax directory as a paltry \$1,050. His house, worth \$6,500, had been bought three years earlier on a \$4,500 mortgage, with a \$2,000 deposit loaned by members of his family. Joe Kennedy had no intention of following his country's colors with his fellow Harvard classmates, class of 1912, or fellow Boston Latin School alumni, and he never did join up. Like ten million fellow Americans, he had to register for the draft on May 18, 1917, but his number was not selected in the first draw nor did he enlist. He was twenty-eight years old and had sworn he would be a millionaire by thirty. Fighting for the country that had given refuge and succor to his grandfather half a century earlier was obviously not going to bring his first million any closer. Although he was in effect only the manager of a single, small deposit bank, the Columbia Trust Company, and his work could easily have been — and was subsequently — taken on by his aging deputy, Mr. Wellington, he decided to stick out the war in his Boston bank.

This turned out, in the spring and summer of 1917, to be harder than he'd anticipated. His father-in-law was John Fitzgerald, the ex-mayor of Boston, the city's greatest rooter and publicist, friend of presidents, three times a U.S. congressman, and constantly in the

limelight — indeed, he had challenged Henry Cabot Lodge for the Senate in 1916, and in 1918 actually won back his old seat in Congress, to return for a fourth inning. It was therefore impossible for Fitzgerald's son-in-law, young Joe Kennedy, to avoid some of the reflected political and public glare. Amid much publicity, Mayor Fitzgerald's son joined up; people began to gossip, even to shun the "yellow" couple from Beals Street. Finally, seven months after America's entry into World War I, Joe Kennedy made his move. He still rejected the idea of a uniform but managed to get himself a job in a Boston shipyard by the Fore River. Within days he was almost sacked for causing a strike that brought the entire shipyard to a standstill and sent alarm bells ringing in Washington, so that the assistant secretary of the navy, young Franklin Roosevelt, had to take charge of the dispute. Kennedy was removed from his post as yard deputy and given a back-room job in charge of stores and the canteen. But it was enough to avoid call-up when the Boston draft board attempted to classify him Grade One Eligible for military service after Christmas 1917. Kennedy thus remained at the Fore River yard until the war was safely over, then abandoned shipbuilding as quickly as he had entered it. His eyes were firmly fixed on making his first million, and the war had been but a postponement of that aim.

I mention this because it was against this personal and national background that John Fitzgerald Kennedy was born. People didn't like his father, and if truth be told, his father didn't like people. Even Joe's wife left him after the birth of their next child, returning to him only at the urging of her father, the mayor, who feared the scandal that separation or divorce in a Catholic family would cause in Boston.

If Joe Kennedy was disliked, and his elder son, Joe Junior, was considered a somewhat aggressive chip off the old block, the apple of his father's eye, then Jack, as he was quickly nicknamed, determined to be *different*. Wanting to be liked, he learned very quickly how to achieve his goal. He had a high IQ — possibly the highest IQ of any American president — but brains don't attract people, so he largely concealed them. Instead he cultivated a sense of humor, largely at his own expense, which captivated people. He was always falling ill, yet was so plucky, never feeling sorry for himself, that he was popular among adults and contemporaries alike.

He had survived a near fatal bout of scarlet fever in 1920 — causing his father to offer half his fortune to the church if God would spare the boy — so school posed little difficulty for such a talented child. He'd long since astonished his parents by his questions, his curiosity, and his sayings. Hospitalization and illness had encouraged him to read early, though not always the sorts of books his mother liked. She later recalled one book that she "wouldn't have allowed in the house except that my mother had given it to him. It seemed very poorly illustrated, with the pictures in brash, flamboyant colors."

Jack liked it very much, and the travels of its protagonist, Billy Whiskers, intrigued him. When he asked his mother where the Sandwich Islands were, she thought he was joking, but looked them up in an atlas and found they were real. Even Jack's father remembered being thus wrongfooted by the infant, though he got the name of the islands muddled. "I remember when he was a little bit of a shaver, before he ever went to school, trying to find out where the Canary Islands were, because he had read something about them in a Billy Whiskers book. Me, I had never heard of the Canary Islands at the time."

Tales of King Arthur, Arabian nights, the jungle stories, all became favorite reading, sparking his imagination and wit. He told his mother, who was becoming ever more religious, that he did not "care much about wishing for a happy death, but that he would like to wish for two dogs." "Gee, *you're* a great mother to go away and leave your children all alone," he said at age four when she left the family for nearly three months.

Jack Kennedy had already been sent to the kindergarten of the nearby Edward Devotion School on Harvard Street in April 1921, when he was still three. The kindergarten, together with a primary room for the first two grades, had been built and opened thirty years before, when it was said to acquire a reputation “which attracted people from far and near to see what many regarded as the perfection of infant training.”

The school, named after a patriotic local Brookline citizen who left a sum of money to the town in the eighteenth century, in 1913 had been extended to make eight classrooms and an assembly hall. Despite his young age, Jack did very well, though without exerting himself more than he needed. “You know, I am getting on all right and if you study too much, you’re liable to go crazy,” he told his mother. He was still only five, and fiercely competitive with his brother in anything athletic. Mrs. Kennedy, his mother, was already having difficulty with her daughter Rosemary, a year younger than Jack, for Rosemary, a slow learner, was in fact suffering from undiagnosed mental retardation. Mrs. Kennedy had also given birth to two more daughters, Kathleen and Eunice, in 1920 and 1921, and was expecting Pat in 1924. She had neither the time nor the energy to look after her boys, and to some extent they began to “run amok” in the neighborhood, being found on a neighbor’s garage roof, getting into fights, and in one famous bicycle clash, involving Jack in a twenty-seven-stitch accident with his brother.

It was time, Mrs. Kennedy felt, for firmer supervision. So with Joe Senior well on the way to his first million dollars on the stock market by manipulating shares to his own personal advantage, Joe Junior was transferred to Noble and Greenough, a nondenominational private boys’ school on Freeman Street in Brookline. Most of the children were of good Massachusetts Yankee stock, and when Joe Junior entered in 1924, his was the only overtly Irish name.

Mrs. Kennedy would have preferred a Catholic school, but her own father and husband had been sent to the famous nondenominational Boston Latin School, across the harbor from East Boston, where père Kennedy owned a series of saloons. Despite having to repeat his final year at school, Joe had somehow managed to go on to Harvard, a feat that was still unusual for Boston Irish boys in the early years of this century — and would have been impossible had he attended a Catholic school. Since then the prejudice against Irish Catholics had not really altered — in fact, Mr. and Mrs. Kennedy were rejected for membership of the Cohasset Golf Club, in the town where they spent each summer, in 1922. It was obvious that being the daughter of a controversial Democratic Party mayor of Boston and son of an East End Boston-Irish tavernkeeper was still an impediment to social progress in the 1920s. A Roman Catholic education for his children would only make matters worse, Mr. Kennedy argued — and got his way so far as his sons were concerned.

That Mr. and Mrs. Kennedy did not see eye to eye over the matter is illustrated by the confusion that surrounded Jack’s schooling in the fall of 1924. At the end of the summer term in June, the Edward Devotion School had marked “withdrawn to attend Noble & Greenough School” on Joe Junior’s attendance and promotion card. On September 11, 1924, Jack was entered as starting grade three at Edward Devotion, under Joe’s old teacher, Miss G.H. Manter. Meanwhile, however, Noble and Greenough Lower School published its new calendar and school list, noting Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. as one of the twenty-one pupils in class C — and John F. Kennedy as one of the twelve in class D!

Did Joe Kennedy take both boys to be interviewed by the principal of the Lower School, Miss Myra Fiske, in the spring of 1924? In his history of the school, Richard Flood quotes a letter written by Miss Fiske to the headmaster of the whole school on April 3, 1924:

Dear Mr. Wiggins,

I am very glad that we decided to take this little John Kennedy. He is a fine chap.

Aged only six and already completing second grade, he no doubt was. Did Mrs. Kennedy want to separate the two boys, as she tried to do later? Truth to tell, we don't know, but term began at Noble and Greenough Lower School on Monday, September 29, 1924, and only on October 22, three weeks later, did the Edward Devotion School note on its record card that John F. Kennedy had been withdrawn to attend Noble and Greenough. Joe Junior and Jack were together again.

For Jack Kennedy it meant marking time, since he was placed in class D, equivalent to grade two. But if he thought life at this new private school was going to be easy, he was very much mistaken, for he had come under the aegis of one of the great primary educators in Boston history, the legendary Miss Fiske. If a certain lawlessness prevailed on the corner of Abbotsford and Naples roads, in the house Joseph Kennedy Senior had bought for his wife in 1921 — and where he had made his first somewhat discreditable but so far not illegal million dollars and was being sucked into the teeming world of motion pictures — it certainly did not exist in the classrooms of Noble and Greenough Lower School. The buildings were old and unimposing, but the education, entirely conducted by women, was considered to be first class.

Given Jack Kennedy's later problems with male teachers, and accusations by feminists that he never really took women seriously as intellectual equals, or was uncomfortable when in the presence of "blue stockings," it is interesting to note how well he responded to female teaching at this early age.

One of the boys who attended the school at that time remembered that it was

a very friendly place. The interesting thing to me was that there were no men teaching at all, all women teachers, and they were very, very strict. And I dare say it's a lot like the English system as I picture it — very strong on multiplication tables, very strong on grammar, very drill, drill, drill, all the time. The only man when we started out was the so-called athletic instructor. He was a veteran of World War I, who had been both shocked and gassed. I'd never seen anyone like that. He was a complete nut and as a result, for the first years, there was no real athletic supervision. We just kind of ran loose in the afternoon.

In a sense, this was to be the pattern of Jack Kennedy's early life — a strict and in many ways excellent training of the mind, on a quasi-British system of education, but with great freedom outside the classroom, where he became a natural and passionate ballplayer.

I think it fair to say that this reflected a split in Jack Kennedy's own character, and that a great deal of this division stemmed from his parents. Given that this discourse is about John F. Kennedy, I cannot enter deeply into that relationship, nor do I wish to pass judgment. However, it is plain that Jack Kennedy internalized much of the tension and emotional hostility in evidence at home. His elder brother, Joe, apparently did not.

Again one of his schoolmates recorded that Rose Kennedy never accompanied the boys to school; in fact, she was rarely, if ever, seen there. The boys, he remembered, were delivered in a shiny black car by a chauffeur. The only evidence of their mother was in the unique school uniform the Kennedy boys wore.

The interesting thing I remember was the uniform. All the boys had to wear was a red jersey and knickers — nobody wore long trousers in those days — and long stockings.

And Rose Kennedy, his mother, I guess felt that the sweater wasn't enough protection for him in the cold weather, so she knitted onto both her boys' sweaters a hood, and they were the only boys in the school who had this hood.

If she could not give her children the warmth they craved, Mrs. Kennedy intended at least to make sure they were warmly dressed. She certainly took no risks with their health, removing the children from school if there was an outbreak of the flu. Later, when they were at prep school, she would write more letters to the matron and headmaster's wife about her children's diet and health than any other parent in the history of the school. However, her ardent religiosity — she attended mass every morning — her frequent trips away from home (often for months at a time), and her still growing family left the boys very much to fend for themselves emotionally. In a school where to be Boston-Irish Catholic as well as the son of a banker-stockbroker with a bad reputation and grandson of a Democratic politician with an even more controversial reputation, this was not easy. Joe Junior reacted very differently from Jack.

Joe, the older brother, was as different from Jack as day from night. He had all the bad Irish traits I can think of. He was very, very pugnacious, very irritable, very combative, and I can remember at recess — we had a very long recess — he would challenge older boys to fight.

Jack, by contrast, refused to brawl. Instead, he took bets on his brother — in marbles. The picture of a future president avoiding fisticuffs but quietly betting on his older brother's chances of victory is, I think, somehow a very symbolic one.

One might ask what part Kennedy's father played in his son's education at this time, and the answer is: an interesting one. In 1924 — the year Jack entered Noble and Greenough — Joe Kennedy went to New York and personally fought off a pool of operators attempting to put the Yellow Taxi Company out of business on the stock exchange. He even missed the birth of his daughter Pat as a result. In November he loaned his new Rolls-Royce to the left-wing Progressive candidate for the presidency, Robert La Follette — a move so strange that La Follette later considered it to have been part of a conspiracy to make him, as a Progressive, look ridiculous in the public eye.

Joe Kennedy, like his wife, was certainly an enigma: first absent, then involved in a surprising way. Late in 1924 he personally came to the rescue of his sons' school, for the main school, which in 1920 had moved from Boston to Dedham, had decided to sell its property at Freeman Street to a developer. The lower school, catering to sixty-five pupils and losing money, was to be closed down altogether.

Even in her nineties, Miss Fiske remembered the moment when she, like the children's parents, heard the news.

The trustees had a meeting on a Sunday. There was a terrible snowstorm and we all made our way as best we could to the school building.

Well, you know, Mr. Wiggins didn't announce he would sell. In order to keep the school going in Dedham, he had to put up another school building — and he couldn't afford it.

Dear Mr. Wiggins — we all admired him. But that did something to people, selling off the lower school.

He came over with Mrs. Wiggins and everybody was there to protest — you never saw anything like it.

Mr. Wiggins asked what was the trouble.

I said, "Mr. Wiggins, why didn't you notify anybody?"

He said they were notified.

I said, "In what way?"

And then I knew he was beginning to lose his mind, which he did later.

"Why, I told so-and-so — one of my good old families — to notify people."

"Well," I said, "you can't notify a school that way, that you're closing it down!"

It is a mark of the respect in which Miss Fiske was held by the parents that they immediately banded together to buy the school buildings back from the developer, provided that Miss Fiske would agree to be the principal of the school to be called Dexter School after the family that had built the property. A committee of ten trustees, including Joseph P. Kennedy, was quickly formed, and for \$165,000 the school was not only bought back, but set up as a non-profit-making corporation with Miss Fiske as principal and all her staff reemployed as teachers.

The new Dexter School opened on January 29, 1926. "The aim of the school is to teach the boy how to study, how to acquire the habit of the greatest possible effort in his work, how best to develop the habits of honesty, courage, perseverance, self-reliance and control — in short, how to express by his own earnest effort the ideals taught him in the school room and on the field," its first prospectus declared.

Miss Fiske later elaborated on this. Her task as she saw it was "to teach a boy how to study, to help a boy develop to the limit of his capacity. Once he has acquired the right habits of study, he will go on on his own momentum. And as he gains facility with the tools of learning and develops mental skills, he will be surprised at what he can accomplish."

There was assembly every morning on the second floor, something no boy who attended Dexter School in those days would ever forget. Miss Fiske, one pupil later recalled,

played the piano well and we'd have assembly in the morning and we learned to recite in unison, the whole school: things like Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, his second inaugural address, pieces from English literature . . . we learned them and we recited them. We sat there and we'd say a line and then we'd add another line until we knew it . . . I mean, I can recite the Gettysburg Address like it was I'd just read it this morning.

Nor were the other women teachers less demanding — or less awesome. One, Miss Dow, became famous among the children for knocking a boy out cold when he was misbehaving — "she wasn't a great physical brute or anything; actually she was a small woman, stocky. She cuffed him from behind when he was fooling — his chin caught the desk and out he went like a light! There wasn't much fooling *after that!*"

"The classes were small, and we knew each other so well," Miss Fiske remembered before her death at ninety-nine. "I loved the boys. Discipline was never a problem to me — it never worried me at all, particularly when I had a bigger school." One teacher she sacked for being "too cold." "How did I keep discipline?" she asked rhetorically. "I simply feel the thing, I feel it. I felt it so keenly that they, the children, felt it!" Love, she said, "doesn't that take care of a lot? And you know, they're twice as smart as you!"

With boys like Bill and McGeorge Bundy in her school, this was doubtless the case, as with her pet, Jack Kennedy, who to impress Miss Fiske offered to get his father to loan his Rolls-Royce if Miss Fiske would take him to the nearby historic sights at Lexington and Concord.

I don't think Rose came along, Miss Fiske recalled. "All the boys came out to see the famous Rolls-Royce. And when it came it was a dilapidated old Ford! Jack never got over how the other boys hooted him — something had happened to the Rolls-Royce!"

However much Miss Fiske might love her charges and however seriously she took her job as an educator — insisting on six grades at the school — she could not overcome snobbery and elitism in a school that drew its children from the oldest and richest Yankees of Massachusetts. Although Jack Kennedy's father had been a founding trustee of the school, the Kennedys, as Boston-Irish Catholics, were still considered a race apart. "Almost everybody was a Protestant," one colleague recalled. "There may have been a few other Catholics, no Jews at all. I think there was a sort of snobbery, which the children adopted. I think that in those days the upper-crust Boston family, of which there were a great many sending their children to Dexter, were very down on the Irish. I mean, these were the days of Mayor James Michael Curley, who was later imprisoned for corruption. The Irish were blamed, I think wrongly, for everything that went wrong with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. To be an Irish Catholic was a real, real stigma — and I'm sure that when other boys got mad at the Kennedys, they would resort to calling them Irish or Catholic."

Whether Mrs. Kennedy kept away from Dexter because of this prejudice we don't know, but we do know that she "never, never appeared" on the scene. Nor was Mr. Kennedy liked. "My father would have nothing to do with him," one of Jack's colleagues recalled of Joe Senior. "A lot of the parents wouldn't even speak to him because he was so disliked. The view was: Mr. Kennedy had made his money in ways that were known, in banking circles, to be unsavory; Mrs. Kennedy's father, 'Honey' Fitzgerald, was a scallywag if ever there was one, and everybody put these two things together and they said, 'This couple's up to no good.'"

Speaking sixty years later, this classmate admitted that these were the attitudes of "very narrow-minded people. But these were the sort who sent their sons to Dexter — Leverett Saltonstall amongst them. They had nothing to do with the Kennedys at all, and I'm sure the boys, they must have had a hard time. Their sisters were never going to be invited to the debutante parties — the Kennedy daughters never, never would have been invited to any of those things — nor would Joe or Jack get invited to them, because the feeling was so strong — I'm embarrassed to tell you this, but it is the truth of the matter."

The boys did their best, both in class and at sports — traditionally the manner in which social prejudice can best be overcome at school. Sport was the means used by their father at Boston Latin and at Harvard, as by Rose Kennedy's father at Boston Latin and later, as mayor, when he became a great supporter of Boston's baseball and football teams.

Mrs. Kennedy was inclined to accept the prejudices with the stoicism and resignation of her religion. But Mr. Kennedy was not very religious, and the promotion of his ever-increasing band of children would become, in a sense, his life's work. Certainly it appears to have been what kept his frail marriage together, a marriage that would soon be sorely tested, once more, when Joseph Kennedy took up with Gloria Swanson the following year.

But for the moment in 1926, as the Dexter School survived its first year of independence, Mr. Kennedy had reason both for satisfaction and dissatisfaction. In 1925 he'd bid a million dollars for the British film company FBO, but failed; in 1926 he was successful. The Boston stocks-and-shares shark would become a movie mogul.

Invited to Jack's tenth birthday party in May 1927, a classmate remembers with awe the treat in store at 51 Abbotsford Road: a cine projector in the living room, a screen, and a

genuine movie show of westerns, at home. But not even home movies would get the boys or the girls invited to the Boston balls.

For some time, in fact, Joseph Kennedy had wanted to move away from Boston. However, his wife was loath to leave her comfortable Brookline house, her parents, her relatives, and her Irish friends. Nothing Joe Kennedy could say would persuade her, and when the fall list of the Dexter School went to press in the summer of 1927, both Joe Junior and John Kennedy were included, in classes five and six, respectively, along with the Blakes, the Bundys, the Morgan Butlers, the Gardiners, Hobbses, Jacksons, Peabody Loring, Appletons, Barstows, Brewers, Hoopers, Huntingtons, Nowells, Storrows, and Clement Titcombs.

Once again, however, Mrs. Kennedy changed her mind at the last moment. An epidemic of poliomyelitis broke out in Massachusetts, and the beginning of the fall term at Dexter was postponed till October. Fearful for her children's health, Mrs. Kennedy caved in. Her husband's secretary and assistant, Edward Moore — who had been secretary to her father when he was mayor of Boston — was dispatched to New York to rent a house. He found one in Riverdale, north of Manhattan, close to an excellent boys' private day school, the Riverdale Country School. Renting his own railway carriage, Mr. Kennedy ferried his wife, children, and belongings from the stuffy provincialism of New England to the heart of the American financial empire, New York. He'd bought a house at Hyannis Port on Cape Cod for the summers, so the Massachusetts connection would not be entirely broken.

Jack Kennedy's Boston education had ended. Miss Fiske was sorry to see the boy go. He was bright, alert, witty, charming, an achiever in the classroom and on the sports field, well mannered, and rarely in trouble.

II

Riverdale, New York, in 1927, was very different from Brookline. Liberated from the social prejudices of New England, Joe Junior began to flourish at Riverdale Country School. Joe Senior seems to have become liberated, too: several weeks after the family's move to New York, he met the sex goddess of Hollywood, Gloria Swanson, in the Renaissance Room of the new Savoy Plaza Hotel, became her business manager, and by Christmas, when she joined him in Palm Beach, her lover. Loaning her money from his old Boston bank, the Columbia Trust Company, and putting his accountant from Fore River days, E. B. Derr, in charge of her finances, Kennedy became to Swanson what William Randolph Hearst was to Marion Davies. But, Swanson afterward related, when Kennedy asked Boston's Cardinal O'Connell for help in getting his marriage to Rose annulled, the cardinal refused.

For Rose the move to Riverdale was certainly traumatic. "For months I would wake up in our new home in New York and feel a terrible sense of loss," she later confessed. That and Joe's simultaneous passion for Swanson, ten years his junior, came "like a blow in the stomach," she recalled — a literal truth in that her stomach was once again swollen, this time with her eighth child, Jean. While Joe cavorted with Swanson in Palm Beach, Rose traveled to Boston to be within easy distance of her faithful obstetrician, Dr. Goode.

Joe's *grande affaire* and Rose's reaction would have a profound effect on their offspring. There had always been tension; now there was a form of undeclared war, Rose venting her unhappiness in a mixture of fanatical piety and expensive trips abroad in

which she sought to make her husband “pay” for his infidelity by buying some of the most expensive designer dresses then being made. As she had once been consort to her father in his greatest days as mayor, so she now determined not to be a downtrodden mother, but an elegant wife whom her ambitious husband could discard only at his peril. She thus allowed Swanson into her home, and traveled with her to Europe for the launch of Swanson’s latest movie, *The Trespasser*, in the spring of 1929. By the fall of 1929 Rose had won; the stock market collapsed and Joe Kennedy, whose father had died the previous year, lost heart in speculation. It was time to consolidate, maritally and financially.

What effect did such marriage strains have upon the children? Increasingly, Joe Junior became a miniature paterfamilias — responsible, purposeful, ambitious, and brooking no back talk — whereas Jack, age ten in 1927, retreated, like his mother, into an emotional shell, disguising his dislocation by a sort of manic dependence on “chums” whom he could seduce, so to speak, by his charm and bravura. Like his mother, he would in a sense never recover from the move away from Boston. A strange, disturbed restlessness entered his life, a homelessness. Home, from this time on and for the rest of his tragic life, would be determined by a relentless urge to be “where the action is”: a challenging of the territorial boundaries, the frontiers of new places, new people. His widow, at the urging of Robert McNamara, would have him buried in Arlington. But his emotional home, like his mother’s, was among the Irish Catholics of Boston, and the only tears he’d ever weep would be in Ireland, the font of his Irishness.

In Brookline, Jack Kennedy had used his cleverness and wit to overcome the prejudices of his peers. In Riverdale, however, there was no prejudice, only the alien atmosphere of a new home, new school, and the tribulations of his parents. He began to leave his clothes behind him wherever he went. Rootless, he would now succumb to a lifetime of life-threatening illnesses, yet fight for survival like one demented. His father was and would remain a man of violent contradictions, at once mean and generous, selfish and selfless, ambitious yet able to rein himself back, heartless yet openhearted. But beneath the many layers (or accretions) of culture that his son Jack Kennedy adopted, there was a much more complex, contradictory, wild, even manic personality than historians and biographers have generally perceived. His father’s contradictions became well known: a blunt, coarse, partly evil, partly noble man who would go down in history with Neville Chamberlain, his friend, as the archdeacon of appeasement. By contrast, Jack Kennedy’s superficial, seductive grace concealed a troubled spirit, a deeper, more restless, discontented individual determined to be always himself, yet uncertain where he was going. It is this quality, of course, that makes his life journey so moving, and its turning points and steppingstones — from his flagrant wartime love affair with a suspected enemy agent at the time of Pearl Harbor to his final love affair with the sister of one of his best friends in Washington, from his apotheosis as a Pacific war hero to his leadership of the free world at age forty-three — so humanly interesting.

In Brookline, it was the elder brother who was aggressive and unsettled. In Riverdale, it was the elder brother who settled and, in the late summer of 1929, was sent to his first boarding school, an Episcopalian establishment barely three decades old, not far from New Haven, Connecticut, with an energetic, somewhat evangelical pedagogue, George St. John, as its headmaster.

As part of her *pax maritalis*, Mrs. Kennedy had agreed in 1928 to the purchase of a large house with ample grounds in Bronxville, not far from their rented Riverdale house, which would become the family “base” for the next decade and a half — years of constant

move as Joe Kennedy “entered” politics, first to elect Roosevelt, then to serve him. Joe weathered the great Crash with the larger part of his ill-gotten fortune intact, but the experience made him cautious and protective in a wholly new way. He had made his millions by insider trading, stock pools, financial cunning, ruthlessness, and a lack of inhibition in trying new ventures. Watching whole family fortunes being wiped out overnight, he consolidated, his concern being to preserve a political fabric that would protect his wealth. Proximity to the political throne of America offered the best chance of influencing the future, as well as profiting by it. He thus became a financial backer of Franklin Roosevelt, and in due course would make a further fortune from Roosevelt’s repeal of Prohibition.

This conscious determination to be at the manipulatory end of events rather than being manipulated Joseph Kennedy extended to his family. He could have tried to get his sons into an old, established prep school, given his wealth and rising position in the world of finance, motion pictures, and, increasingly, politics, but his choice of Choate in Wallingford reflected his urge to maintain his parental hegemony. Russell Ayres, an old “cub” from the Harvard freshman baseball team he’d helped coach in 1912, was a teacher at the school, which was financially shaky and needed an infusion of wealthy offspring. Mr. Kennedy wanted to be wanted, and the school wanted him as a parent. Mrs. Kennedy disliked the notion of compulsory Protestant chapel every evening, but she was overruled. Though she gave in to her husband on the issue, she never visited the school again, despite its relative proximity to New York.

Jack Kennedy ought perhaps to have been relieved when his elder brother was sent away to boarding school, leaving him king of the Bronxville castle, but the truth is, he was locked into a competitive sibling rivalry that wasn’t good for either boy. Jack could be witty and amusing about many things. His father need not worry about Christmas presents, he wrote in late December 1929. “Due to fiancanil [*sic*] difficulties at Wall Street, we will not be encumbered by any weight in that direction. Woolworth’s five and ten cent store will probably be our object Saturday.” But the Swiftian tone soon gave way to more marked feelings when he described his brother Joe’s return from his first term at Choate. “When Joe came home, he was telling me how strong he was and how tough. The first thing he did to show me how tough he was was to get sick so that he could not have any Thanksgiving dinner. Manly youth,” he mocked at age twelve, adding, “He was going to show me how to Indian wrestle. I then through [*sic*] him on his neck” — this episode recalled Joe Junior’s recent beating at Choate when caught roughhousing by a sixth-former. “Did the sixth formers lick him. Oh man he was all blisters, they almost paddled the life out of him. . . . What I wouldn’t have given to be a sixth former. They have some pretty strong fellows up there if blisters have anything to do with it,” he remarked feelingly.

Perhaps this was what worried Mrs. Kennedy, that Choate was simply too rough for Jack, given his delicate health. More likely, however, it was the school’s religious denomination — at least that is what Seymour St. John, the headmaster’s son, later recalled: “I don’t know all the reasons why, but his mother was restive about Joe being at a non-Catholic school. She was a little nervous about that, and I think she rather pushed for Jack to go to a Catholic school.”

Why Jack needed to be sent away to boarding school so young, when he was doing so well at Riverdale, is a moot question. When Seymour St. John succeeded his father as headmaster of Choate many years later, the first thing he did was abolish the seventh-grade intake, for the children were simply too young for such uprooting: “It was the first thing I got rid of, the seventh grade. I didn’t think we were capable of handling this effec-

tively for that age group, and that group too often were sent away to school for reasons that weren't best for them, or the school. I found that we graduated only 33 percent of our seventh-graders six years later. So that was the proof."

Seymour St. John's father, however, was not of the same opinion, and it was he who had persuaded Mr. Kennedy to send Joe to board at Choate at fourteen, writing that he could not "help taking the liberty of urging you at least to consider the possibility of letting your sons have at least three years in the school from which they plan to enter college — four, we believe would be better! More and more, we see the added advantage that comes to the boy who has a really adequate chance to grow into the spirit of the school and to make a real place for himself among his fellows."

Mr. Kennedy had not immediately been won over. Though St. John had been ingratiatingly keen ("We 'fell' immediately for those attractive snapshots that were clipped to the applications" of both Joe Junior and Jack, he wrote, and talked of "mighty good Harvard material in the making"), Mr. Kennedy had been wary. "My only hesitancy," he explained, "is I realize that when the boys go away to school, they are practically gone forever, because it is three years there and then four years at college, and you realize how little you see of them after that. I may be selfish in wanting to hold on for another year at least."

In fact, Mr. Kennedy released Joe for four years, not three, and though Joe ultimately did well at Choate, his first year seems to have been purgatory. Though he had a high IQ and his Riverdale teacher had considered him "a manly, clean-minded boy, an excellent worker" ranking "in the upper quartile of his class," he did poorly in his first year at Choate, prompting his mother, if not to visit him, at least to apologize for his disappointing performance, writing that she was "very sorry indeed to hear that Joe is not up to what he should be in his studies. . . . I am going to write to Joe and urge him to do better work, and I am sure he will cooperate, as he has never been satisfied to have a low standing in his class. I have sent the various notes on to his father, who is in California."

Mr. Kennedy, who had been brought in to Pathé Exchange Inc. as its savior, was himself finding it more difficult to manage people than to fiddle the stock exchange, just as he had found when assistant manager at the Fore River shipyard. In a palace coup, while Kennedy was holidaying in Palm Beach early in 1930, he was ousted as chairman, returning to his shady dealings on Wall Street — and Franklin Roosevelt's election campaign.

For the moment, Joseph P. Kennedy managed to stay on the right side of the law and of history, demonstrating political prescience and independence of mind. Meanwhile, his "selfish" desire to keep his boys at home evaporated, and the only question became whether Jack should follow his brother to Choate.

Certainly the staff at Choate understood that Jack would be arriving in September 1930, but once again Jack's mother appears to have taken an unseen hand. In the fall of 1930, to Mr. St. John's puzzlement, Jack was suddenly sent away to Canterbury, a Roman Catholic boarding school near New Milford, Connecticut. It was a place after Mrs. Kennedy's own heart, set on a bluff, cold hill, with strict Catholic priests and seminarists for teachers: an austere, bleak institution with a huge stone chapel at its center, and a mere hundred pupils on its rolls.

Joe Junior, fifteen, began to prosper at Choate; Jack, thirteen, at Canterbury School, did not. He signed in at his new school on September 24, 1930, as an eighth-grader, one of thirty-two new boys — all Catholic.

Jack's surviving letters home are addressed "Dear Mother," while his letters to his father are addressed "Dear Dad." The handwriting is bold, with significant spaces be-

tween words, and the *ts* crossed high in all instances. His observations, whether about himself or school, are also bold and emphatic, with a pronounced sense of self. "It's a pretty good place but I was pretty homesick the first night," he wrote. "The swimming pool is great even though the football team looks pretty bad. You have a whole lot of religion and the studies are pretty hard. . . . This place is freezing at night and pretty cold in the daytime." He turned down a new suit his mother sent him as he disliked the color "and it was a pretty itchy looking material," he informed her that winter, also recounting the fate of one of his school companions in a serious accident while sledding at high speed. In a strangely prophetic brush with death, he had towed the injured boy half a mile uphill, then a further quarter mile to school. The boy "was all gray and as we carried him upstairs he fainted. He went to hospital an hour later and he was just a white grayish color. I think maybe he was operated on yesterday but I am not sure. He had internal injuries and I liked him a lot. That about all. Love to everybody, Love Jack."

Did Jack hope to stir his mother, ever anxious about health and danger? Or was he simply recording, in his characteristically forceful yet emotionally detached way, the view from Canterbury hill? His postscript, announcing that he had lost two pounds, suggests the former — and is our first indication of a serious health problem that would dog him for the rest of his life.

He played baseball and football, and was good at both, but the absence of newspapers and journals disturbed him, even at the age of thirteen. "Please send me the *Literary Digest*," he wrote to his father, "because I did not know about the Market Slump until a long time after, or a paper. We just finished breakfast and am going to chapel in about two minutes."

Although he wanted to keep abreast of current events, he was most attached to his books. From early childhood, his preference had been romance and questing, King Arthur and his knights being his particular favorite. In early adolescence, Walter Scott kept him absorbed. "We are reading *Ivanhoe* in English," he wrote to his father in early spring 1931, and a few weeks later to his mother: "P.S. We have Scott's *Lady of the Lake* in English." He wanted to do well, and proudly reported his marks as 93 in math, 95 in English, 80 in history, 78 in science, and 68 in Latin (he would never do well in languages); but his health was already playing up. A missionary had come to school to talk about India — "one of the most interesting talks that I ever heard" — but "when he was saying the Confiteor I began to get sick, dizzy and weak. I just about fainted and everything began to get black so I went out and then I fell and Mr. Hume [the headmaster] caught me. I am O.K. now," he assured his father, adding, typically, that his brother Joe had "fainted twice in church so I guess I will live."

But would he? It was soon clear that Jack's medical problems were of a different magnitude from those of his older brother Joe at Choate. Shortly after Easter 1931 Jack became ill. "I was weighed yesterday and I have lost one pound and have not grown at all," he had written to his mother. "I guess the only thing wrong with me is that I am pretty tired." His work had been slipping, and the headmaster had had a word with him. "I have also been doing a little worrying about my studies because what he said about me starting of [*sic*] great and then going down sunk in. I will admit I did not work anymore than usual and I got pretty good marks." The days of coasting along at the top of his class, however, were over. Puzzled by his symptoms, the doctor recommended an appendectomy, which was performed at a hospital in New Haven.

The appendix operation put paid to Jack Kennedy's Canterbury career. So ill did he become that he was not sent back to school that term. Mr. Kennedy had been at logger-

heads with his wife about Jack's attending this strictly Catholic boarding school from the start, and must have already talked again to Mr. St. John about Jack switching schools and following his brother to Choate, for Wardell St. John, the assistant headmaster, had written to him on January 20, 1931, to say that "when I didn't hear, we took it for granted that Jack was returning to Canterbury. This is the better solution though we would have welcomed Jack here. . . . In any case, Jack is on our definite list for next Fall and we are hoping earnestly that the environment may agree with him as much as it seems to have agreed with Joe."

Jack's appendix operation in May 1931 provided all concerned with a break in his schooling that would make transfer to another school seem more natural, and on May 14 Mr. Kennedy's secretary wrote from New York to say that Jack would not "return to Canterbury for the balance of the term," but would be sent to Choate in the fall, subject, of course, to his passing the school's entrance examination. Once again, Mr. and Mrs. Kennedy were living separate lives, so that she was "in the South," in Florida, while Jack underwent his operation in New Haven and subsequent convalescence in Bronxville and Hyannis Port.

Strangely, though he sailed through the Choate School entrance exam in mathematics and history, Jack's Latin test was unsatisfactory, prompting Mrs. Kennedy to send handwritten letters to the school immediately when she reached Cape Cod to promise she would engage a private tutor so that by the end of September Jack would "know his first year Latin. As a matter of fact," she added, "he hates routine work but loves History and English and subjects which fire his imagination. . . . He has a very attractive personality — we think — but he is quite different from Joe for whom we feel you have done so much."

Joe Junior was indeed flourishing at Choate, from which he would graduate with honors and laurels. By contrast, Jack's years at the school would be little different from his brief sojourn at Canterbury — years marked by illness and an academic performance way below his potential — a square peg in a round hole. The truth is that Joe Junior, after early years of aggression, fitted; Jack did not. The schools were scarcely to blame, and indeed both have survived a further half century of elite instruction. Both have become coeducational, too; in Jack Kennedy's time both schools reflected the mores of the time, involving a rigid segregation of the sexes.

For Jack Kennedy the years at Choate were to be the most difficult of his life. Illness dogged him. Within weeks of arrival as a new boy in September 1931 he was in the infirmary; he was there again within weeks of the Christmas holiday, and again within weeks of the Easter vacation.

Outside the infirmary Jack presented a dichotomy. His first housemaster at Choate was also a sports coach and math teacher with a beautiful wife. Nicknamed "Cap" Leinbach, he had served with American Army Intelligence in France and Germany in World War I. At one point, Seymour St. John later recalled, Leinbach had been captured by the Germans "behind the lines and doing intelligence work, I guess, and he was taken out to be shot. And in a way I've never quite understood he disarmed his captors and got away, escaped. He was the kind of guy that would do that, if anybody would. Cappy liked Jack; he was very fond of kids, that was his 'basic.' " "Jack has a pleasing personality, and is warmly received by all the boys in the house," Leinbach reported after only a week. "Rules bother him a bit," he noted, however, and it wasn't long before his reports were recording an alarming lack of application.

No one was more concerned, however, than the headmaster, George St. John. In his forties he had taken holy orders, and he took an almost patriarchal interest in his school flock. No boy in the history of his headmastership — he had been headmaster since 1908 — presented a greater enigma to St. John. To use another analogy, St. John was like a horse breeder. To him, each of his charges was at school to be broken in to life's serious purpose. He sensed, from the very beginning, Jack Kennedy's potential. Jack scored 119 on the Otis IQ scale on entry; his intelligence rating actually went up four points during the year to 123 (the scale stopped at 130), yet the boy's performance lagged pitifully behind his native ability — and his behavior likewise. He got on so badly with his roommate that they drew a line down the middle of their room in Choate House, across which neither trod. "Jack's results are not yet commensurate with the standard we set for him," the headmaster reported. "His problem is still one of application." Jack's father wrote to say that he agreed "entirely. I feel that Jack has a great deal of natural ability, but is careless in applying it. Unless he receives pretty strict supervision, it might react against him as time went on."

But how to apply the strict supervision? As would become manifest, harsh discipline only made the problem worse. Mrs. Kennedy worried about Jack's failure to put on weight, harassing the headmaster's wife with letter after letter. "How is Jack's weight?" she demanded after New Year 1932. "My records show 114½ lbs. in September and 115 in January — after supper!" Mr. Kennedy cautioned against too much candy — but of love there was no mention, save in the letters Jack wrote home asking after his brother and sisters.

Wardell St. John, the headmaster's brother, was exasperated by such parental nagging about weight and diet. "He looks well as far as I can see, but he's Irish, crazy about athletics, and emotional. The combination doesn't produce the kind of calmness that encourages added pounds!"

It didn't. Illness vied with ill behavior. "Is Jack studying any harder and any more steadily?" the headmaster minuted the housemaster. "I know you are doing all you can, but Jack has me worried."

Mr. Kennedy was donating many thousands of dollars' worth of cinematic projection equipment to the school, which made St. John's failure to solve "Jack's problem" even worse. But Cap Leinbach had no magic Kepler's Malt (Mrs. Kennedy's remedy) that would restore Jack's equilibrium. No one, not even his eventual wife, could tame the errant, wounded knight, so restless and spirited. "What makes the whole problem difficult is Jack's winning smile and charming personality," explained Mr. Leinbach to the headmaster. "It is an inescapable fact that his actions are *really* amusing and evoke real hilarity."

In a less intelligent child, Jack's failure to concentrate and toe the school or classroom line would have become a bore rather than a challenge. But all who dealt with Jack were captivated by his contradictions, and won over by his wit and zest. Joe Junior might be a chip off the old block, but Jack seemed to have his own block, in every sense of the word. The year before, from Canterbury School, Jack had written to his father that he was reading *Ivanhoe* in English "and though I may not be able to remember material things such as tickets, gloves and so on I can remember things like *Ivanhoe* and the last time we had an exam on it I got a ninety-eight."

The days of 98 were over, however. His untidiness and indiscipline were an affront to the staff of the school. "To fasten his mind upon an assigned task is his most difficult job.

for he is bubbling over with a host of half-formed ideas of a different type. . . . Whenever Jack wants a clean shirt or suit," his housemaster recorded, "it is necessary for him to pull every shirt or suit out of the drawer or closet, and then he 'does not have time' to put them back. His room is inspected night and morning every day, and I always find the floor cluttered up with articles of every description. When he sees me enter the room he will at once start to put everything in order. He does it willingly and often remarks, 'I never get away with anything in this place.'"

Despite Mr. Leinbach's eagle eye, things went from bad to worse, and Jack ended his first year at Choate failing French and Latin in the annual examinations. Meanwhile his mother had just given birth to her final child (prompting Joe Senior's facetious remark that if she gave birth to any more children he would give her a black eye), and she now telephoned the headmaster — an "impassioned message from Mrs. Kennedy that things must be arranged so that Jack does not have to tutor this summer. She said that with nine children it was impossible for her to take on the extra burden," the headmaster's wife noted.

Was Mr. Wheeler of the Belmore Tutorial Agency in Hyannis such a burden? The truth is, Jack's lackadaisical approach to life and domestic discipline were more than Mrs. Kennedy could cope with, and who can blame her? She could not, with so many children, be inspecting his room morning and night, as well as running after him all day long — and yet, psychologically, Jack's behavior was probably unconsciously designed with that very end in mind. It certainly kept Mr. Leinbach's attention. Rose Kennedy, however, was a formidable opponent. Though Jack would go on to break a thousand girls' hearts — even the heart of his nation in death — he never broke Rose Kennedy's. He was simply sent back to school for the summer.

"I think Jack needs to learn right now that work which is not done during the school year has to be made up in the summer," the headmaster had written to Jack's father. If this was a trifle harsh, considering the bouts of illness that had kept Jack out of class, it was perfectly fair in terms of unapplied ability. But although Jack made sure he never failed another subject so as to necessitate summer school, his attitude to school did not alter. Winston Churchill had despised formal instruction at Harrow, having to attend a "crammer" or tutorial school even to get into military college (Sandhurst). Likewise, Jack Kennedy — as romantic and mother-fixated as Churchill — was out to make his mark in his *own* way, not according to the expectations of others.

Rose Kennedy might be too busy as a mother of nine to give her errant second son the love he craved, but she meant well. What she could not give in openhearted warmth she gave in the only way she knew, bombarding the school with letters about Jack's health, and even exhorting the school — which she would never visit save for the unveiling of a bust of her son in 1967 — to instruct its boys in the formal techniques of letter writing. "The fact has come to my attention that some boys at Choate do not seem to know how to write a letter correctly," she admonished the headmaster, Mr. St. John. "It would be a practical idea if a short period could be given demonstrating the different forms." For Mrs. Kennedy, the "forms" — social, religious, educational — meant a great deal.

Jack Kennedy's response to this was something that would increasingly dominate his life at school, in puberty and adolescence. School became a sort of foreign field in which he was condemned to fight. For the rest of his life he would maintain a love-hate relationship with it, knowing how much he owed to teachers like Leinbach and even Mr. St. John, for all his pomposity and pedagogic rhetoric; they had *cared* about him in a way that his

own mother couldn't, and for that he would always be grateful. "All last year I worried about Jack," St. John informed the school's rooming committee, and he meant it. "He is an able boy with the cleverest turn of mind," he acknowledged, and he felt that Leinbach had shown "genius" in the way he had dealt with Jack, whereas the new housemaster, Mr. Musser, was far too lax. Jack needed, in St. John's view, "an older, experienced Master, one with a sense of humor and a rod of iron."

Mrs. Kennedy had beaten her sons as small children and, according to her last born, continued to do so, using clothes hangers as her favorite instrument of punishment. But Jack was too big now to humble in that way, too bright, too potentially loving. It would be a mistake to sentimentalize his journey, yet how otherwise can we make sense of the childhood and youth of this future president, whose adult life would be such an extraordinary and unpredictable ascent? He would astonish his father and mother and even his closest friends. Most of all he would surprise himself. Yet the truth is that the potpourri of half-baked ideas that perplexed his masters, his indiscipline and lack of concentration at school, masked a very mixed-up boy who could not conform to a second tyranny on top of the one he'd endured, and would continue to endure, at home. He seems not to have known depression or great introspection; instead, he set about constructing a Jack Kennedy world.

The first indication of a school problem that went beyond lack of academic application came with his new housemaster's initial report, in Jack's second year at Choate. "My only criticism," wrote Mr. Musser, "is his tendency to foster a gang spirit." The truth was, Jack was in search of a cause, a challenge, something on which he could cut his teeth. Whether the reason was psychological or physiological is difficult to say; even the headmaster, whose insight into Jack Kennedy was uncanny, came to feel the problem was a matter of his "glands." "If Jack were my own son I believe I should take him to a gland specialist," he would note shortly before expelling him.

Whatever the cause — and in the classical narcissistic case, resentment against a mother's withholding of early warmth during the first, crucial infantile years is seen as the motivating cause behind the patient's psychological defenses — Jack Kennedy put his energies into a network of social relationships he could turn to his own advantage. "He was easygoing, had a sunny disposition, and was popular with everyone — all qualities I frankly envied," recalled one boy, a year senior to Jack at Choate. His new housemaster's lack of harsh discipline defeated him. "I want to come back to Choate House," he is said to have told Cap Leinbach. "Down where I am now I can get away with anything — and it's no fun."

Fun was to become Jack Kennedy's leitmotif, the operating imperative for the rest of his life: his own, special response to the cards the good Lord had dealt him, from medical infirmity to psychological injury, from "inferior" sibling status to physiological glandular developments over which he had no control. He really began to have fun in his third year at Choate, after his elder brother's triumphant graduation; Joe Junior had won the coveted Crimson Trophy for the boy who best combined scholarship and sporting achievement.

In the fall of 1933 Jack was at least freed of his brother's shadow. His father and mother had traveled to Europe with Roosevelt's son to meet Mussolini — and to obtain lucrative liquor licenses in anticipation of Roosevelt's repeal of Prohibition. Jack had left East Cottage and was in the school's West Wing, under the stern authority of John J. Maher, his English teacher of the year before. "Maher was a highly disciplined fellow," Seymour St. John recalled, "and came from a family, not unlike the Kennedy family, of Irish Catho-

lics. He lived in Bridgeport, came as a scholarship boy to Choate in the early twenties, was an excellent athlete, good at baseball and basketball, went on to Harvard, played on the Harvard football team, and then came back to Choate to teach. My family were very fond of him — he stayed with us in the summers on Rhode Island as our family tutor. As I say, he was personally disciplined, and I liked him *very much*.” But Jack did not; in fact Maher now became Jack Kennedy’s *bête noir*, and there began a duel between housemaster and pupil that would end only with Jack Kennedy’s departure. Moreover, Jack had a new bosom companion, LeMoyne Billings, a big, strapping, lost soul whose father, a doctor, had died the year before — who also stood in the shadow of a high achieving elder brother. The two boys became instant friends, with Jack Kennedy determined to challenge the established ethos and rules of the school, and supplant them with his own.

J.J. Maher had educated Choate boys for ten years on the basis of fear, but Jack was completely unafraid. As Seymour St. John said, “The usual motto held good at school with teachers as with much else: If you can’t beat ’em, join ’em. But with Jack Kennedy it was the reverse. If Jack felt he couldn’t join ’em, then he was going to whip ’em. He was ready to fight, and he fought Maher.”

Maher’s reaction was far from flexible. “I think Maher’s only way, if people were going to fight him, his only way, was discipline, toughness,” Seymour St. John recalled. “He disciplined himself, and by God he was going to discipline those who needed to be disciplined. And he knew that his floor, his corridor so-called, had the reputation of being a very disciplined hall. The kids were on time, they were neat, and they knew that was the rule. They did their job.

“Jack Kennedy got tossed into that, and he wanted no part of it. He wasn’t neat, he wasn’t on time, he was a sloppy kid at that age. He didn’t do his work effectively — he went through the motions, but he never really worked at it. . . . I think J.J. Maher got to the point where he did not like Jack Kennedy. I don’t think he ever took it out on him, but it was not a happy relation.”

Jack’s choice of companion was bound to make things worse, Seymour St. John related.

LeMoyne Billings was a tragedy — a tragedy in himself and a tragedy really for Jack. “Josh” Billings, LeMoyne’s brother, was a very good friend of mine. Again, he was a first son, captain of the football team at Princeton, and he did everything right. Then LeMoyne came along, second son; he was a big, handsome boy, did adequate work, but he had nothing really to hold on to, and when he found Jack Kennedy, he just thought this was it, this was for him. And he would do *anything* for Jack Kennedy. Anything Jack did, he would follow right along with him, and be the stooge, and was inseparable from Jack those last two years, which were not good for Jack. Jack liked him, he liked very much having somebody at his beck and call who’d always go along with his jokes, pranks, or whatever. But there was never any LeMoyne saying, “I don’t think that’s a good idea.” It was *always* a good idea if it was Jack’s idea.

Well, anyhow, in those years I think the main thing about Jack Maher — I don’t think he was quite creatively imaginative enough to get Jack wanting to do what he wanted him to do. He tried, but at that time Jack needed, I think, a different kind of master. He needed a Leinbach more than he needed a Maher.

Jack was determined, now that his brother Joe was out of the way, to do as he pleased, and only as much as he pleased. In Harold Tinker he had an inspiring English teacher who recognized that although Jack Kennedy didn’t *appear* to apply himself, he was extremely gifted, something that astonished even Jack’s friends, such as Ralph Horton, who said, many years later:

Was he a great student in those days? No. He was a very mediocre student. He did have one particular flair that stands out in my mind and that was a flair for writing. We would have to submit essays two or three times a year and we had an English teacher by the name of Dr. Tinker. I can remember that after we had submitted our essays, Dr. Tinker said to Jack Kennedy, "Jack, you have a very definite flair for writing. It's a career that you should think of pursuing when you graduate from school and college." And it came as sort of a shock to me because I never considered Jack Kennedy a very outstanding student in any particular area.

To be liked by his peers, it was important not to be labeled intellectual. Jack therefore kept his intellect well concealed, as always, beneath his thatch of unruly, curly brown hair, dressing sloppily and becoming almost fanatical in his passion for sport, even though he would never be well enough to shine at any save swimming, which, in the absence of a pool, was not practiced at Choate. "He wanted very much to be liked by other boys," Seymour St. John recalled. "He made some good friends, and he was loyal to his friends, and peer group meant much more to him than teachers, who were sort of antagonists." Only sometimes did Jack allow his native intellect to shine through. Despite his weak concentration he undoubtedly imbibed a great deal from the Choate faculty, as Courtenay Hemenway, the head of the history department later recalled.

His examination grades were almost always considerably higher than those of his daily work, a sign of native ability. He realized his high potential in history, where he blossomed under the brilliant teaching and great knowledge of details of Russell Ayres. He appreciated Ayres's off-beat information and constitutional learning. In fact, perhaps here began Jack's thorough and versatile understanding of government and politics. Jack also appreciated his experience with perhaps the best English department in secondary schools — Douglas Shepardson, Harold Tinker, Audley Fitts, Carey Briggs, Darrah Kelley, Allen Smart, and William Freeman, all of whom he had. He understood the reading, even when he hadn't read it.

Hemenway's strange assertion was mirrored by Jack's classmate David Beecher Stowe: "I sat next to Jack in our English history course. The one time that seemed noteworthy to the rest of us was his copy of the textbook, which remained unopened at the end of the school year; yet Jack managed to get the minimum passing grade."

Ralph Horton noted the same and asked Jack how he did it.

He was very interested in political events and particularly international events. . . . We used to listen to an old radio program called *Information Please*, and they'd ask very difficult questions, everything from sports to opera. One particular time we were listening to the program and I'd know roughly 10 percent of the answers and Jack Kennedy would know 50 or 60 percent. He never seemed to read any more than I did. he wasn't a better student, and I, at that time, didn't think he was brighter than I was. I asked him how he happened to do so well on these particular tests.

Horton was bowled over by Jack Kennedy's unusually serious answer: "I'll pick up an article, I'll read it, and then I'll force myself to lie down for almost half an hour and go through the total article in my mind, bringing to memory as much as I possibly can. Then analyzing the article, and then attacking it and tearing it down."

This was not said boastfully. LeMoyné Billings remembered the same evidence of ability, adding: "I don't think I know any other kid who subscribed to the *New York Times* at fourteen, fifteen, and read it every morning." Though J.J. Maher was unimpressed, other teachers became aware of Jack's talent, and one at least, Russell Ayres, alerted Mr. Ken-

nedy to it. "Mr. Ayres told me that [Jack] has one of the few great minds he has ever had in History," Mr. Kennedy wrote at one point to his eldest son, Joe Junior, "yet they all recognize the fact that he lacks any sense of responsibility and it will be too bad if with the brains he has he really doesn't go as far up the ladder as he should."

Jack Kennedy, however, was determined to keep his brains to himself and rejected the ladder before him. This was precisely what infuriated Mr. Kennedy when he returned from a brilliantly successful trip to Europe with Jimmy Roosevelt. He had already banked a fortune by quasi-fraudulent trading in a stock pool that deliberately pushed up the share price of the Libby-Owens plate glass company that would be confused in the public's mind with a beer-bottle manufacturer of the same name, Owens, prior to Prohibition's repeal, then dumped the stock before the public realized the mistake. Once in England Kennedy had obtained the U.S. franchises for Haig and Haig, John Dewar, and Gordon's Dry Gin, importing millions of bottles of whiskey for "medicinal" purposes so as to be ready for the moment of repeal. In the interim, however, on September 25, he had written to George St. John to thank him for what the school had done for his eldest son, Joe Junior — and to complain in execrable English about his second son:

But I feel that the fundamental thing to watch is the absolute necessity of keeping him employed in various enterprises. I feel definitely sure that he can do things very well, provided he has enough of them to do and feels he is getting results. Unfortunately he has not gained any weight this summer; therefore, football is not a possibility. I think he must be very carefully watched to see that he is headed into other enterprises such as the *Brief* [the Choate School magazine, written and produced by the pupils], rowing and other things to keep his mind active.

He still has a tendency to be careless in details, and really is not very determined to be a success. Occupation in a number of things seems to be, to me at least, one of the important steps for his future.

Mrs. Kennedy and I will be back around the middle of November. We shall come up to see you at that time to learn how he is getting along.

Mrs. Kennedy never did appear, but Mr. Kennedy did. Jack was in fact playing junior football. Cap Leinbach considered Jack a "tower of strength on the line," but Mr. Kennedy thought otherwise: "I can't tell you how unhappy I felt in seeing and talking with Jack," he wrote candidly to St. John. "He seems to lack entirely a sense of responsibility. His happy-go-lucky manner with a degree of indifference does not portend well for his future development," he complained.

The headmaster was caught between two stools. He thanked Mr. Kennedy for his "helpful letter," but to his great credit, stood up for his charge. "I am ready to bet right now that Jack will follow in Joe's footsteps, though he may have to go through an immature phase meantime . . . Every boy is different. But I never saw a boy with as many fine qualities as Jack has, that didn't come out right, under the right conditions, and living with the right people, in the end." St. John promised to write more fully when he'd spoken to Jack and his masters once more, so that he could properly "analyze the situation." This he did, and his letter must stand as one of the most insightful ever written about Jack Kennedy at this time:

Jack and I talked together for a good while yesterday, and since you gave me permission, I let him read your letter. I also let him read the reports from his different masters. I asked Jack if he had had a good chance to talk with you when you were here, and he said that there really wasn't very much time. He said you had more time to talk with

some of his masters than him, and that when you talked with him, you were of course "rather peeved."

My honest belief is that we need to do for Jack two things: one, follow him up and check him all the time; two, treat him as a man, and show that we have confidence in him.

The phrase "in loco parentis" was never better merited than now, as headmaster and pupil formed perhaps a closer bond of understanding than father and son.

I hope very much that my conviction about Jack will not trouble you, and that you will sense that it is no hasty conviction. The fact of the matter is that I cannot feel seriously uneasy or worried about Jack. The longer I live and work with him and the more I talk with him, the more confidence I have in him. I would be willing to bet anything that within two years you will be as proud of Jack as you are now of Joe.

Jack has a clever, individualist mind. It is a harder mind to put into harness than Joe's — harder for Jack himself to put in harness. When he learns the right place for humor and learns to use his individual way of looking at things as an asset instead of a handicap, his natural gift of an individual outlook and witty expression are going to help him. A more conventional mind and a more plodding and mature point of view would help him a lot more right now; but we have to allow, my dear Mr. Kennedy, with boys like Jack, for a period of adjustment. All that natural cleverness Jack has to learn how to use in his life and work, even how to cover it up at times, how to subordinate it and all the rest. I never yet saw a clever, witty boy who at some stage in his early development was not considered fresh. It is only because he hasn't learned how to use his natural gift. We must allow for a period of adjustment and growing up; and the final product is often more interesting and more effective than the boy with a more conventional mind who has been to us parents and teachers much less trouble.

It was a noble letter, but not even Mr. St. John could have predicted that within eighteen months he would be on the point of expelling Jack from his school. Far from rewarding St. John for his literally masterly faith in him, Jack Kennedy became wilder and less controllable, driving Mr. Maher, his housemaster, to despair.

Those wishing to see in Jack Kennedy's childhood problems a physiological malfunction can certainly point to a seemingly endless array of illnesses that went largely undiagnosed; the worst of these came at the end of January 1934, when he was sixteen. At first he was put in the infirmary, but the school doctor became anxious and Jack was taken by ambulance to New Haven, where the doctors could only say he was seriously ill with a "blood infection." Prayers were said for him in chapel, and Mr. and Mrs. St. John went to see him, but Mrs. Kennedy, holidaying in Florida, did not even appear, relying on Mr. Kennedy's assistant Eddie Moore for secondhand information.

Jack's body had become covered with swellings or hives. Eddie Moore, visiting Jack in hospital, attempted to encourage him by telling him the doctors were "simply delighted to have the trouble come out to the surface instead of staying inside." To which Jack shot back: "Gee! The doctors must be having a happy day!"

"Jack's sense of humor hasn't left him for a minute," Mrs. St. John wrote to Mrs. Kennedy, admiringly. "This morning Jack had his first meal, after what must have seemed a terribly long time, and he said to me: 'It was just as well that they decided to give me breakfast; if they didn't, I think the nurse would have come in pretty soon and looked in my bed and not been able to see me at all.'"

"We're still puzzled as to the cause of Jack's trouble," Mrs. St. John confessed. "He didn't look at all well when he came back after Christmas, but apparently had improved

steadily since then — and it was a great shock to us to find him so sick when we ourselves returned from Florida Saturday afternoon.”

Mrs. St. John took Jack’s Victrola to the hospital, and his books. Mr. St. John, racing against time to get out the school reports, became quite emotional in writing to Mr. Kennedy: “Jack is one of the best people that ever lived — one of the most able and interesting . . . *We pray Jack is better every hour.*”

On February 28 Jack Kennedy left the hospital to convalesce in Florida, whence he wrote a charming letter to Mrs. St. John, his surrogate mother, to “thank you for your numerous kindnesses to me when I was in the hospital. I’ll never be able to repay them, and so I’ll have to be satisfied with just letting you know my appreciation.”

His appreciation didn’t last long, however. He’d shown courage and wit in adversity, impressing the St. Johns and all who witnessed his brush with death — passed off at the time as hepatitis. Yet it seemed as if this very courage and wit, so touching in its self-deprecating quality, served as the engine of survival, but once in good health, became wild and directionless. The remainder of the winter term and the Easter vacation were spent in Florida, and he returned to Choate in April 1934, shortly before his seventeenth birthday. By June, at the close of the school year, he had caught up enough in his work to pass honorably in English, history, chemistry, and French — but his behavior caused Mr. Maher to despair.

Jack takes a great deal of understanding, for he is such a complete individualist in theory and practice that the ordinary appeals of group spirit and social consciousness (even to the plea of not walking on the other fellow’s feet) have no effect. To say that I understand Jack is more an expression of fond hope than a statement of fact. Jack is young in his ways, and sometimes childish in his actions, but his head is old. At first his attitude was, You’re a master or a sixth former and I am a lively young fellow with a nimble brain and a bag full of tricks. You will spoil my fun if I let you, so here I go; catch me if you can.

When he discovered that no one was getting particularly excited about his silly game, or that he was playing the simpleton to his own amusement, the game lost its zest. And now for the first time I’m beginning to hope a little that Jack has learned to distinguish between liberty and license.

The hope was in vain, for inside Jack’s churning heart were a host of unresolved contradictions and buried wounds. Toward Mrs. St. John he could be his brave, charming self, with a sense of self-deprecating humor that won over even the sternest of his critics; but with his friends like LeMoyné Billings, a tougher, more savage, more injured psyche emerged. He had, the previous June, obtained a number of advertisements for the school magazine, on which Billings worked. “If you should want me to do anything during the summer, I will be at the [Cape Cod] address during the next three months,” he wrote, ending, “I’ll see you next fall which is a darned sight too near for comfort.”

Such remarks were and would be the nearest Jack Kennedy would come to a statement of affection. In part this reflected the macho, “tough boy” image he wished to inhabit, but it concealed intense loneliness and a need for company, as his burgeoning correspondence with Billings would reveal. The letters were so profane that Jack worried about their falling into the wrong hands: “Dear Crap!” he wrote from the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota in June 1934. “I had to laugh Ha-Ha about you not getting any letters — I’ve written you 3 already or 4. Somebody must be intercepting the mails. I hope to hell that nobody reads them because they would think I was a terribly ‘unclean-cut guy.’”

It was here that Jack Kennedy’s adolescence played itself out. Mr. St. John had pre-

dicted that Jack's failure to apply himself was merely a passing phase, after which he would start to match his elder brother in his father's estimation. In the longer term this would be so, but St. John underestimated the force of Jack's feelings, and his difficult adjustment to adolescence. *Ivanhoe* and *The Lady of the Lake* were no longer enough: he had finally, as a young adult, to come to terms with an absent, frigid mother, a father whose expectations he could not fulfill, and a series of illnesses he himself could not control and the doctors could not properly identify. "I am suffering terribly out here," he admitted to Billings, "and I now have gut ache all the time. I'm still eating peas and corn for my food and I had an enema given by a beautiful blonde. That, my sweet, is the height of cheap thrills." His father had telephoned — "For 20 min. he was trying to find out what was wrong with me and for 20 minutes we were trying to hedge around the fact that we didn't know." Even school was preferable to the endless tests at the Mayo, which were due to run on for a further fortnight, while Billings was billeted with Jack's parents at Cape Cod, awaiting his release from hospital. "I feel very sorry for my family being burdened with you for 2 or 3 weeks, but I am burdened with you for 9 mo[nths]," he remarked sarcastically.

"Burn this when you get finished," Jack ordered, "and for God's sake don't leave it around." Yet this profane and bitter part of his personality was the matrix of his socially acceptable self, a duality that would characterize the rest of his life. In the eyes of his contemporaries and of his teachers, Billings was a bad influence, parasitical and lax, but the many hundreds of letters Jack Kennedy wrote to Billings over the years from 1933 to 1946 testify to the importance, for Jack, of such an intimate, loyal bond: a friend who would cheerfully take all the insults, sarcasm, contempt, malice, envy, and gall that Jack Kennedy hurled at him, knowing, instinctively, that this was something that had to come out, like the draining of an infected psychological wound. Jack Kennedy's path to greatness would by no means be linear; indeed he would have to surmount a thousand setbacks and trials before reaching the seat of ultimate power. But inasmuch as Billings performed that vital role of confidant, of king's fool, of long-suffering foil to Jack Kennedy's painful, barbed wit, Billings may be said without sentimentality to have been a true and remarkable friend. Let down by his mother, unable still to find common ground with his somewhat ogreish father, Jack Kennedy was testing the world around him — trying the patience of everyone from doctors to teachers — and it was Billings's *loyalty* that helped him to emerge from his adolescent trials with his confidence in himself strengthened rather than broken. If a boy like Lem Billings could follow him through the proverbial thick and thin and still *believe* in him, then life, *his* life must be important and worthwhile, not in Choate terms, or in his father's expectations, but in his *own* terms.

The crisis of Jack's school career was about to come. From St. John's view it would be a crisis of authority, of *his* authority versus Jack's. In Mr. Kennedy's terms it would be a crisis of Jack's basic irresponsibility or childishness. But in Jack Kennedy's terms it was not a crisis at all, but a climax. From puberty onward he had been testing the parameters and frontiers of his existence, testing the limits of affection felt for him by his mother, his father, his teachers, his siblings, his friends — and their patience. In that sense it was, of course, childish, particularly in one who had, as even Maher observed, such a mature head upon his shoulders; but it was touching too, for this would be a turning point in Jack Kennedy's life.

Jack Kennedy remained in the Mayo Clinic and Saint Mary's Hospital, Minnesota, for a month, undergoing an endless succession of enemas and tests, as well as the strict diet of peas and corn. But apart from remarking "what an interesting case" it was, the medical

profession could find no explanation. "If Jack showed the slightest tendency to a relapse he would have to be taken out of school for a year," his father reported to St. John, "and sent, possibly, down south. Of course this greatly concerns me and at the same time annoys Jack very much."

It did. In hospital Jack had been cosseted, manhandled, and womanhandled in a disturbing way for an adolescent — had become the pet of the hospital, with limitless attention. He'd been spoiled, in other words, and, once his health was restored on Cape Cod, his main concern was to have fun. "I am now sporting around the beaches in flesh-colored bathing trunks acquiring that chocolate tan which is the rage this year at Newport and Hyannisport," he wrote to Lem Billings. He nicknamed himself "Hot Screw" and did not look forward to returning to "that Hole again," as he referred to Choate.

In his mind, and certainly in his sexual awakening, he had already left school and was not prepared to act out meek obedience and set a responsible sixth-form example to the juniors as his elder brother had done. Joe Junior had spent a year in London, studying at the London School of Economics under Harold Laski, the socialist thinker and writer, and had accompanied Laski on a servile trip to Russia. "Joe came back about 3 days ago and is a communist. Some shit, eh," Jack commented in a letter to Billings. At Choate, on their return in September, the two adolescents became inseparable — and a growing threat to St. John's authority. J.J. Maher was again their housemaster, his bedroom next to theirs, and his patience soon ran out. "Attitude poor at the outset; sloppy, seldom on time; but has shown a reversal of form and is really having an excellent try," Maher reported in October; but by November the signs were ominous. "Matched only by his roommate, Billings, in sloppiness and continued lateness," he expostulated. "All methods of coercion fail," he admitted.

Aware that his father would be receiving such reports, Jack quickly wrote to him, promising to turn over a new leaf — "I thought I would write you right away as LeMoyné and I have been talking about how poorly we have done this quarter," he confessed in his best handwriting (his father having complained about how "disgraceful" it was), "and we have definitely decided to stop any fooling around. I really do realize how important it is that I get a good job done this year if I want to go to England" — for his father had promised Jack the same opportunity to study under Laski as his brother Joe had had. "I really feel, now that I think it over, that I have been bluffing myself about how much real work I have been doing."

Such contrition was short-lived. In the next days it would be clear that Jack's life was paved with good intentions, none of which he could fulfill. To Mr. Kennedy's irritation, he was soon in even more hot water, with the headmaster, and though allowed to join his family for Christmas in Florida, was ordered back to school early, on January 7, "in lieu of discipline at this time," St. John informed Mr. Kennedy.

Such discipline did not, however, do the trick. Mr. Kennedy had written to Jack in December that "after long experience in sizing up people, I definitely know you have the goods, and you can go a long way," and presumably said the same to him at Christmas. But such faith in Jack's talents, that he would turn out "a really worthwhile citizen with good judgment and understanding," were not what Jack wanted. In the turbulence of adolescence, with the conspiring forces of sexual awakening, and of desire to shed the oppressive shroud of parenthood and discover his own identity, he was approaching that showdown with parental authority which could crush or connect him.

"As you know, I am still considerably concerned about his health," Mr. Kennedy wrote to St. John after the holidays. "However I agree that he still lacks the proper attitude to-

ward the consideration of his problems. I have always felt that he has a fine mind. He is quite kiddish about his activities and although I have noticed a tremendous improvement this year, I still feel that what he needs to be trained in is the ability to get a job done.”

Mr. Kennedy was, however, still skirting the issue. To St. John and the school staff it was obvious that Jack was not in a real mood to “get a job done.” He was spoiling for a fight, and it was not long in coming. As St. John’s son later recalled, “With the winter term, J.J. Maher justifiably showed signs of getting to the end of his rope.” Maher’s report to St. John, after a January talk with Jack and Billings, was one of the worst he’d ever written:

I’m afraid it would be almost foolishly optimistic to expect anything but the most mediocre from Jack. He’d like to be a “somebody” in school, but as in practically everything else, he wants to sit back and have it all fall into his lap, standing off on the sidelines catcalling and criticizing those who *do* things.

For a year-and-a-half, I’ve tried everything from kissing to kicking Jack into just a few commonly decent points of view and habits of living in community life, and I’m afraid I must admit my own failure as well as his. Jack is prompt only under the club; neat virtually never. He has little sportsmanship (not even the lower politic type of “you scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours”). Unfortunately it must be all for Jack or he won’t play. . . . Neither Jack nor his roommate has accepted his duties as a Sixth Former. It is too late, I believe, for them to repair their lost position here, because from the outset they have demonstrated in their silly, giggling, inseparable companionship that the good of the group takes second place to their convenience.

The group, however, was a matter of definition. St. John soon castigated in his Sunday sermon those “muckers” who worked against the common good of the school, but in doing so he involuntarily gave Jack Kennedy a name for the clique he was building around himself.

J.J. Maher had criticized Jack for not even observing the basic political forms — “It must be all for Jack or he won’t play” — and Maher was right. Neither in Congress nor the Senate would Jack Kennedy indulge in mutual back-scratching; it was not his style, and he was not good at it. Where he excelled was in gathering around him friends and followers, and with these he now set about challenging St. John’s authority. Having decided on the name Muckers (akin to the English term “navvies,” used to describe cheap Irish laborers who did the basic spadework in digging drains, ditches, roads, and railway routes), Kennedy even arranged with the local jewelry shop to make a series of small gold shovels as the group’s emblem — “About \$12, as I remember,” one of the twelve “disciples,” Paul Chase, stated. “I roomed at that time with a member of the Student Council,” Chase continued. “I told him that we were going to bring in a pile of horse manure and have our picture taken on the dance floor over Spring Festivities with our gold shovels! He apparently took me seriously and passed the word on to the head.”

St. John was not amused; indeed, he was livid. As he later confessed, “At one time it came to the point where I was saying to myself, ‘Well, I have two things to do — one to run the school, another to run Jack Kennedy and his friends.’”

St. John had no doubt as to who was “the chief mover in the group,” as he put it. “The next day at lunch the head read off our thirteen names to the accompaniment of low whistles from the assembly,” Chase recalled. “He demanded our presence in his study immediately after lunch. The head ended a rather lengthy meeting with a statement that he deemed us unfit to continue at Choate, and we were thereupon dismissed from school.” Maurice Shea, another pupil, remembered, “We were told we were no longer students at

Choate; we could go pack our bags.” Ralph Horton, secretary of the Choate Muckers Club said, “We were bad apples and were corrupting the morals and integrity of the other students in the school. And at that stage of the game Mr. St. John dismissed each one of us from school — expelled us.” Looking back on the event many years later, Maurice Shea remarked, “I don’t blame him. He thought that we were not quite the boys that he wanted to have the stamp of Choate on. So after luncheon we were all called into his study and, as I remember, he talked to us, one by one, told us our faults, and announced that there was a train sometime between five and six o’clock and that was the train we should be on. However, somehow, between two o’clock and five o’clock he relented or changed his mind and somehow we were given a second chance.”

St. John himself made notes after the occasion. The thirteen Muckers he considered a

colossally selfish, pleasure loving, unperceptive group — in general opposed to the hardworking, solid people in the school, whether master or boys.

The emblem of this group is a shovel. It was suggested among them that they have their pictures taken at Festivities, each pulling his girl on a shovel; and again that they have their picture taken, standing beside a manure pile, to show that the shovels were used.

In his study St. John “told the whole group that I would expel one or all of them, I didn’t care which, if the spirit of our school was at stake. . . . I certainly read them a riot act. . . . The three of the lot who perhaps are the best candidates for expulsion are Ralph Horton, Jim Wilde, and Jack Kennedy.”

Without certificates of honorable dismissal from the school at the end of the academic year, none of the Muckers would be able to go on to universities, at least not to the Ivy League colleges. “I know now that he was just trying to scare us to death, but it all seemed very real at the time,” Chase recalled.

It was certainly real enough for Mr. Kennedy to catch the Saturday train from Washington, where, ironically, he was running Roosevelt’s Securities and Exchange Commission to clean up Wall Street, when summoned by telegram. “His father received a message one day saying, ‘There is a crisis in Jack’s life here at Wallingford. Please come at once,’” Rose Kennedy remembered when she unveiled the bust of her son at Choate School. “He was working in Washington for President Roosevelt. The president said, ‘But there’s a financial crisis here in Washington. You’ve got to stay!’ But, being a father, the president quite understood my husband’s apprehension, so my husband came up here,” she recounted.

The whole idea behind the Muckers was that there would be safety in numbers — “Jack’s main thesis was that we were such ‘wheels’ the head could not kick us *all* out,” one of them, Bob Beach, recalled. In that sense, Jack Kennedy’s first political party — of school anarchists — had failed, for most of the group were terrified, as St. John quickly realized. But Jack Kennedy was more frightened of his father’s wrath than he was of St. John. The succession of poor reports and failure to apply himself had already tested his father’s patience. His mother had already become more like a distant relative than the woman who had given him birth; now he stood to “lose” his father too.

In a very real sense, this was the turning point in Jack Kennedy’s adolescence, and one may legitimately wonder whether he would have survived as the self-confident, brave (in the face of continual, undiagnosed illness), and aspiring young man he became if his father had turned against him.

Lem Billings later recalled how anxious Jack became. "It was one thing to take on St. John; it was quite another to confront his father. For hours he just kept pacing around the room, unable to sit still. . . . He was terrified that his father would lose confidence in him once and for all."

At noon on Sunday, February 17, 1935, Mr. Kennedy reached Wallingford and was shown into the headmaster's study, where St. John set before him his decision to expel Jack unless the Muckers were instantly disbanded and the boys agreed to toe the Choate line. Mr. Kennedy fully supported St. John. "I've always been very grateful to him," St. John later recorded. But as Doris Kearns Goodwin revealed, in the confrontation between father and son, the father turned up trumps — and earned his son's undying loyalty, for all that would separate them in the years ahead. As the telephone rang and temporarily detained St. John, Mr. Kennedy leaned over and whispered to his son, "If that crazy Muckers Club had been mine, you can be sure it wouldn't have started with an *M*." In this moment Jack Kennedy finally came of age — his father his friend, no longer his oppressor.

Jack was put on probation and permitted to remain at Choate, from which he graduated that summer with good enough grades to take him to the Ivy League university of his choice, Princeton, where his Mucker friends Lem Billings, Ralph Horton, and Paul Chase were headed. Prescott Lecky, a psychologist from Columbia University, in a session with Jack after the Muckers scandal, had warned of the psychological trap Jack had made for himself. He had voluntarily assumed within the Kennedy family the role of "thoughtlessness, sloppiness and inefficiency — and he feels entirely at home in that role. . . . A good deal of his trouble is due to comparison with his elder brother," Lecky noted. (Jack had said, "My brother is the efficient one in the family, and I am the boy that doesn't get things done. If my brother were not so efficient it would be easier for me to be efficient. He does it so much better than I do.") "Jack is apparently avoiding comparison and withdraws from the race, so to speak, in order to convince himself that he is not trying."

However true this was, it missed the real point. As Alice Miller wrote so movingly in *The Drama of the Gifted Child*, narcissistic adults are usually unwilling to look honestly at their own childhood. "Very often they show disdain and irony, even derision and cynicism," she wrote. "In general there is a complete absence of real emotional understanding or serious appreciation of their own childhood vicissitudes, and no conception of their true needs — beyond the need for achievement. The internalization of the original drama has been so complete that the illusion of a good childhood can be maintained."

Jack Kennedy never spoke ill of his childhood or his parents or his siblings. He "made do" with what he was given, and after the climax of his anti-authoritarianism at school, he settled down, more or less, to a life of achievement, confident he had the love and understanding at least of his father.

The "drama" of his early childhood, the traumas of the warmthless mother, life-threatening hospitalization, and displacement in his mother's concern by Rosemary, his retarded sister, followed by six more siblings, was covered up in a precociously witty, brainy child. Such a child, the famous psychologist D. W. Winnicott pointed out, constructs a "pseudo-ego, or head-ego, a kind of emergency construct with which, on the one hand, to comply with the world, which he may despise because he has felt let down by it, or on the other hand, with which to control and manipulate people."

The damage done in early childhood could not be undone; it would show its scars in Jack Kennedy's private world all his life. But his father's intervention ensured a real bond between father and son that would prove immensely important in the years ahead. Those

who claim that Jack Kennedy was merely the callous pawn of an ambitious millionaire father are willfully misunderstanding the nature of that relationship, as well as the personality and talents of Jack Kennedy. Lack of maternal warmth may have damaged Jack Kennedy's ego, psychologically speaking, inhibiting "a healthy body-ego." "He does not feel loved, hence he cannot develop his own capacity for loving" is Rushi Ledermann's description of this narcissistic disorder. But while this may have been true in terms of Jack Kennedy's love life, it was certainly not true of his relations with other men, with whom his sense of fun, of daring, of honesty, and of self-deprecating wit would make him perhaps the most popular politician of the twentieth century.

Choate School, despite the scandal of the Muckers, had at least provided a stable, caring environment, with some brilliant teachers and a moralistic pattern of exhortation, at a critical period in Jack Kennedy's life. "Jack has it in him to be a great leader of men, and somehow I have a feeling that he is going to be just that," Wardell St. John, the assistant headmaster, wrote perceptively in his final report in June 1935. "We shall miss Jack in spite of all our grumbling," George St. John himself added. When Jack Kennedy was murdered, twenty-eight years later, St. John wrote this to his son Seymour, who succeeded him as headmaster:

An hour ago Rose Lee came where I was reading with this: "I am sorry I have bad news for you." She turned on the T.V., and I looked and listened. In a very few minutes last rites were administered, and a priest was first to say, "The President is dead."

However much trouble Jack made us as a boy, however much we may have deprecated his politics, I was nevertheless fond of him. I am grateful that last year I had occasion to tell him so, and that he wrote me a nice letter in return.

He had great and tireless ability. He was a master of dialectic. I feel as Mr. Churchill said he did about the socialist government in England: "I can only hope it will succeed — but not so far as to become permanent."

But life and death are too big for politics — for even convictions about a Republic. I could throw my arms around Jack, bless him, and say an unrestrained good-bye. 🐼

The Vision Thing

Shaun O'Connell

The works discussed in this article include:

- All by Myself: The Unmaking of a Presidential Campaign*, by Christine M. Black and Thomas Oliphant. 343 pages. The Globe Pequot Press, 1989. \$19.95.
- The Worst Years of Our Lives: Irreverent Notes from a Decade of Greed*, by Barbara Ehrenreich. 275 pages. Pantheon Books, 1989. \$19.95.
- The Quest for the Presidency: The 1988 Campaign*, by Peter Goldman, Tom Mathews, and the Newsweek Special Election Team. 430 pages. Simon and Schuster, 1989. \$9.95 (paperback).
- Whose Broad Stripes and Bright Stars? The Trivial Pursuit of the Presidency, 1988*, by Jack W. Germond and Jules Witcover. 478 pages. Warner Books, 1989. \$22.95.
- What I Saw at the Revolution: A Political Life in the Reagan Era*, by Peggy Noonan. 353 pages. Random House, 1990. \$19.95.
- The Politics of Rich and Poor: Wealth and the American Electorate in the Reagan Aftermath*, by Kevin Phillips. 262 pages. Random House, 1990. \$19.95.
- My Turn: The Memoirs of Nancy Reagan*, by Nancy Reagan, with William Novak. 384 pages. Random House, 1989. \$21.95.
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Where there is no vision, the people perish.

— Proverbs

And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve;
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind.

— Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

Archibald MacLeish noted that W. B. Yeats was unable to use a proper “public” language in his poetry on Irish politics.¹ In reply to this charge, Yeats wrote “Politics,” a poem that invokes Thomas Mann — “In our time the destiny of man presents its meanings in political terms.” The poem asks, “How can I, that girl standing there, /

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My attention fix / On Roman or on Russian / Or on Spanish politics?"²

Yeats wrote "Politics" at the end of the 1930s, W. H. Auden's "low dishonest decade."³ In our time — Paul Kennedy calls it "fin-de-siècle America" — our destiny no less defined in political terms, we may have similar difficulty fixing our attention on American politics, at least as it was evidenced in the low, dishonest election of 1988.⁴

For all its idiocy and hypocrisy, the presidential election of 1988 seems fraught with import: the beginning of the end of America's economic primacy, as we became a debtor nation, or the end of our beginning as a model of democracy, as the worldwide turn away from tyranny in 1989 indicates. Safely past Orwell's 1984, the momentous year 2000 (or Stanley Kubrick's dystopia, *2001*) looms. Writing on fin-de-siècle fantasies," Hillel Schwartz imagines vast implications.

For the West, in fact, these last years have come to seem a now-or-never time. The Nineties, in particular 1999 and 2000, are not simply numerological curiosities; they are critical markers on which we have come to lay our cultural bets. Either the Nineties will see the Politics of Desperation and the twenty-first century the Era of Annihilation, as political scientist Richard Falk has written, or with futurist Alvin Toffler we will master *The Third* (and glorious) *Wave*. . . . Some 6 billion people will be either suffocating or celebrating on — or off — this greenhouse Earth in the year 2000.⁵

It is enough to turn you away from the political process to recall that neither candidate for the American presidency seriously addressed this issue in 1988.

For Yeats "politics" was one thing and "that girl" another. She embodied simple beauty and love, the rhetoric of the heart. "But O that I were young again / And held her in my arms." By implication, "politics," for Yeats, meant difficult issues and complex analysis, the rhetoric of the head. The presidential election of 1988 obliterated Yeats's distinction. The "handlers" — the campaign managers, speech writers, media consultants, spin controllers, flacks, advisers, friends, and wives of the candidates — did their best to convince Americans that each candidate for the presidency — George Bush or Michael Dukakis — was nothing less than "that girl standing there," a worthy emblem of beauty and a sufficient object of desire. Since both Bush and Dukakis suffered from severe charisma deficiencies, each made his case by running down the other. Forget issues and analysis, implied both candidates in their misleading rhetoric and their manipulatory media messages. Come live with me and be my love, courted Bush through the long, hot summer and fall of 1988. Trust in me, cooed Dukakis. In November, America decided it liked Bush better, but all of us were diminished by the inane campaign. Small wonder that now, after the midterm congressional elections, on the brink of the 1992 presidential campaign, as a new millennium approached, we would like to forget all about 1988, a bad dream that continues to haunt the American mind.

Try as they might — or as their mighty manipulators managed — neither presidential candidate could match the beauty or loveliness of Ronald Reagan, the cover boy of American politics, still standing there; still smiling, nodding, joshing, and waving his way through the Iran/contra and arms-diversion scandal; still trying to remember what he knew and when he forgot it. (Reagan maintained "plausible deniability" of his subordinates' actions, though Oliver North, Reagan's point man on the Iran/contra extravaganza, assumed "that the president was aware of what I was doing and had, through my superiors, approved of it.")⁶

In her memoir, *My Turn*, Nancy Reagan neatly characterizes her charming and baffled husband in a domestic epiphany that plays like a scene from an unmade movie. *Mr. Reagan Goes to Washington*, a scene that illustrates his innocence at the risk of exposing his ignorance. In November 1986 he entered their White House bedroom and said, “Honey, I’ve got some bad news. Ed Meese just came in and told me that money from the sale of arms to Iran went to the contras.”⁷ Darn it, sweetie, why don’t those other guys tell me what’s going on around here?

But is it pointless to mock Ronald Reagan. He remains the Great Deflector, refracting light and heat. During his first televised debate with Walter Mondale in 1984, Reagan’s halting and confused performance raised questions about his age and competence, but his advisers came up with the campaign-winning quip, which he delivered, flawlessly, at the beginning of their second debate: “I will not make age an issue of this campaign. I am not going to exploit, for political purposes, my opponent’s youth and inexperience.”⁸ The issues of age and competence were thus neutralized — transcended rather than confronted — by clever advisers and an actor who found, late in life, the role for which he was born. America, amused, gave its heart and soul again to Nancy’s “Ronnie.” Unlike nagging, worried Jimmy Carter, who told the nation it was suffering a “great malaise,” or Walter Mondale, who *promised* to raise taxes, Ronald Reagan was America’s buoyant personification — cute, pious, optimistic, manly, wry, and, above all, innocent. He was the Gipper — not the true George Gipp, of course, just the actor who played the part of the Notre Dame football hero in *Knute Rockne — All American* (1940) — and America, the supporting cast in his movie of the mind, was on his team. As Garry Wills puts it.

The power of his appeal is the great joint confession that we cannot live with our real past, that we not only prefer but need a substitute. Because of that, we *will* a belief in all his stories. . . . He is the ideal past, the successful present, the hopeful future all in one. He is convincing because he has “been there” — been almost everywhere in our modern American culture — yet he has “no past” in the sinister sense. He is guilelessly guiltless.⁹

Elsewhere Wills shows he is well aware that Reagan *has* a past, “in the sinister sense.” (For example, in 1952, when he was president of the Screen Actors Guild, Reagan signed a waiver allowing Music Corporation of America to produce television programs. *General Electric Theater*, which Reagan would host, was an MCA production. In 1962 John F. Kennedy’s Justice Department investigated MCA and Ronald Reagan lost his General Electric contract.)¹⁰

Yet Ronald Reagan remains an American enigma, a mysterious source of power and persuasion whose absent presence hovered, like the voice of the Wizard of Oz, over the 1988 campaign. He had been a popular actor who got by on his looks and his smile; a genial salesman for the right; a host of two television series (also *Death Valley Days*) who believed that “politics is just like show business.” He became America’s White House host.¹¹

His wife, however, insists he is a man without mystery. “The Ronald Reagan you see in public is the same Ronald Reagan I live with.”¹² Indeed, Nancy’s Ronnie is an idealist who is too trusting of those around him, like the folk hero played by his Hollywood friend Jimmy Stewart in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. On the other hand, Peggy Noonan, speech writer for Reagan and Bush, represents Reagan in an arresting image that evokes his enigmatic, charismatic, and symbolic qualities. Her Ronald Reagan is a “gigantic heroic balloon floating in the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day parade, right up there between

Superman and Big Bird.” The Reagan White House, she decided was “a void.”¹³ This from a woman who agreed with Reagan’s policies, who wrote for him (inflating his balloon with air?), who admits she had a “crush” on him.

Nancy Reagan and Peggy Noonan, in their own sweet ways, effectively handled the Great Communicator. Thus their memoirs of the Reagan era allow us to glimpse the mystery behind the rational facade of American politics. Nancy, by her own admission, worried about his image as a warmonger, prodded Reagan to meet with Gorbachev, leader of the formerly “evil empire.” At the Geneva “summit” conference in 1985, she and aide Michael Deaver contrived to place the world leaders before a cheery fire for a photo op. Thus public relations became foreign policy, though Nancy insists that she, despite passing along advice from her astrologer to presidential aides, did *not* make policy. “First Lady, Dragon Lady,” is a chapter title in *My Turn*, showing Nancy trying to deflect the criticism that she was another Edith Wilson, another power-hungry woman behind another disabled president.¹⁴ With her passion for remodeling public buildings in which she dwelled (in California and in Washington, D.C.), her spendthrift ways (the new china), and her shop-till-you-drop acquisitiveness (those “borrowed” gowns), Nancy developed, as essayist Barbara Ehrenreich acidly puts it, a “reputation as a senescent bimbo with a lust for home furnishing.” But Ehrenreich grants that the former First Lady is more than that: Nancy is a woman who cannot take full credit for the good work she did as First Handler because she is determined “to prove that Ronnie really *was* president after all.”¹⁵

My Turn, as its title implies, is a self-centered, dramatic monologue in which the misunderstood heroine gets mad *and* gets even. Nancy thinks that she was criticized for her lavish clothes because “some women aren’t all that crazy about a woman who wears a size four, and who seems to have no trouble staying slim.”¹⁶ Romance, envy, and spite mix in revealing anecdotes. For example, she fondly recalls her 1952 marriage to Ronnie at the Little Brown Church in the Valley. The bride wore “a gray wool suit with a white collar and a small flowered hat with a veil.” Thirty-six years later, after eight years in the White House, living again in Los Angeles (now in Bel Air), she discovers her suit still fits. Take that, all you fat, jealous whiners who accuse her of extravagance!¹⁷ Nancy Reagan lives in a world where all values and motives are personal, where there are no substantive issues beyond imagery and loyalty.

Nancy Reagan’s memoir is most convincing and sympathetic when she shows her devotion to her husband and reveals her parental pains over the wayward lives of their children.¹⁸ She is far less convincing in persuading us that Ronnie was his own man, not a mere actor who prided himself on making his morning calls to the set, hitting his marks, and delivering his lines with artfully contrived sincerity. Nancy argues, for example, that Reagan wrote many of his own speeches, including that famous one in support of Barry Goldwater at the 1964 Republican convention — the speech that persuaded many Americans that Ronald Reagan (actor, host, salesman) was a plausible politician. She cites the eloquent conclusion of Reagan’s speech.

You and I have a rendezvous with destiny. We can preserve for our children this, the last best hope of man on earth, or we can sentence them to take the first step into a thousand years of darkness. If we fail, at least let our children, and our children’s children, say of us we justified our brief moment here. We did all that could be done.¹⁹

However, this speech better shows Reagan’s ability to plagiarize and recompose than it does to formulate ideas in his own language. Beyond the obvious nod to FDR, Reagan’s

resonant summing up closely echoes Abraham Lincoln's Message to Congress (December 1, 1862):

Fellow citizens, we cannot escape history. . . . The fiery trial through which we pass, will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation. . . . We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last best, hope of earth. Other means may succeed; this could not fail. The way is plain, peaceful, generous, just — a way which, if followed, the world will forever applaud, and God must forever bless.²⁰

Reagan spoke of protecting the free enterprise system from government interference and the nation from the threat of communism, while Lincoln spoke of freeing the slaves. Lincoln's "last best, hope of earth" became Reagan's "last best hope of man on earth." Both men appealed in the name of future generations. Both men faced the possibility of failure, before which Reagan was curiously humble ("We did all that could be done") and Lincoln overreaching ("The world will forever applaud, and God must forever bless"). But Lincoln, to say the least, inspired whatever eloquence and originality Reagan (or his supportive wife) might claim. Ronald Reagan knew how to say (or play) his lines; he also knew where to find them.

Peggy Noonan gave Reagan the words with which to soar into realms of obscurity and pseudopoetry. After 248 soldiers of the 101st Airborne died in a plane crash, she drew from several sources — Shakespeare, JFK's speech writers, and James Agee, as she cheerily admits — to give Reagan voice: "They must be singing now, in their joy, flying higher than mere man can fly, as flights of angels take them to their rest."²¹ For his fine speech at Normandy — "These are the boys of Pointe du Hoc" — Noonan found her source in the plangent title and tone of Roger Kahn's memoir of the postwar Brooklyn Dodgers, *The Boys of Summer*.²² Take from where you can and go with what you've got! Noonan's compositional credos are entirely consistent with Reagan's theatrical-political principles. She affirms that "history really is biography," that "hyperbole is the soul of oratory," that "a speech is a form of theater."²³ (Aphorism is the soul of glibness?) In Ronald Reagan's farewell address, she invoked John Winthrop's city upon a hill for his final flight of rhetoric.

And how stands the city on this winter night? More prosperous, more secure, and happier than it was eight years ago. But more than that: After two hundred years, two centuries, she still stands strong and true on the granite ridge, and her glow has held steady no matter what the storm.²⁴

Her revelations about Reagan's detached presence during his presidency make me wonder about the stability of that glowing city, set upon a ridge, during a stormy winter night. In his/her words, it seems too mystic, too much the evocation of an evanescent dream, to last.

Of course, apart from rhetoric, Reagan had his "values" — anti-tax, anti-abortion, pro-SDI, pro-contra — which drew Noonan away from CBS, where she wrote for Dan Rather, and into the White House. "I was a partisan. I yearned to help the president whose views I shared. I ached to write his words."²⁵ But her yearning ache transcended ideology. Like other Americans, she was attracted to Reagan more by passion than by reason. "He moved us. We loved him."²⁶ Unlike any other president since Kennedy, Reagan evoked the promise of American life. Reagan — not Gary Hart, who tried and failed to recompose himself into an ideal image — was our Gatsby. For Reagan, too, evident in his every ges-

ture and phrase. “there was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promise of life.”²⁷ Reagan told America, “You ain’t seen nothin’ yet” — an Al Jolson line revived as a motto for the 1984 campaign by speech writer Ken Khachigian — and America believed him.²⁸

Star-struck Peggy Noonan, growing up in Brooklyn, papered her walls with pictures of men in Kennedy’s cabinet. (Bobby Kennedy, granted, had star qualities, but it stuns the mind to imagine Dean Rusk as anybody’s pinup.) Transformed into a Republican yuppie during the anti-Vietnam War protest era, she lost her heart to Ronald Reagan — his anti-government rap songs, his endearing young charms, even his smile and his shoe shine. In one of her weirder anecdotes, she recalls waiting outside the Oval Office to meet Reagan. All she could see was his foot, dangling and bouncing. It was oh so “frail. I imagined cradling it in my arms, protecting it from unsmoothed roads.”²⁹ Head-over-heels, so to speak, she smoothed Ronnie’s road with carpets of rhetoric.

Noonan’s mind, revealed in *Revolution*, is a mishmash of enthusiasms (for the rich and powerful), prejudices (against liberals, communists, and those pushy homeless who, egged on by liberals, insisted on begging near the White House), and fantasies (about saving the world and becoming famous). Her book reads like the overwrought diary of a bewitched, bothered, and bewildered groupie when she contemplates the White House through a romantic haze and Scott Fitzgerald-like imagery. “There is the whiteness of the paint and the play of the sun; the shadows look so clean and well defined. The flowers are so beautiful against this house, so crisp and rich.”³⁰ (Presidents are different from you and me. They have whiter paint!) Yet Noonan also has a keen eye for artifice, noting how creepy it is that the flowers planted around the White House are always replaced before they fade, and how the Reagan White House felt like the MGM commissary in the 1940s.

But Noonan’s political “values” are revealed as self-serving rationalization when she claims that the Reagan “revolution” was designed to lift the burden of taxation from average American families — those same families who paid for Reagan’s arms buildup and illegal contra funding, those same families who will pay for generations for the bailout after the savings and loan scandal. These are the result of Reagan “values”: military might, paramilitary operations, and unregulated free enterprise, underwritten by vast government investments. Noonan, of course, was no policy analyst. Rather she was, in the words of Donald Regan, chief of staff, “the girl who does the poetry.”³¹ Her “poetry” mixed personal anecdotes about the “boys” or the “heroes” in the balcony during Reagan’s speeches, with soaring, upbeat rhetoric, which the president delivered with the appropriate quaver and far-seeking gaze.

Noonan, intrigued by the mystery of Ronald Reagan, compares him with several figures: FDR and JFK, predictably, for charm, charisma, and a way with words. However, one of her analogies calls into question the quality of her literary training at Fairleigh Dickinson University: Reagan “was to popular politics what Henry James was to American literature: He was the master.”³² (Pop techno-thriller writer Tom Clancy would be, as Nancy Reagan might say, a more “appropriate” comparison than Henry James, who never pandered to popular tastes.) Amazingly, revealingly, Noonan’s Ronald Reagan is also compared to the Gentleman Caller of Tennessee Williams’s *The Glass Menagerie*, a man “who comforted a shy girl and touched a demoralized family.”³³ Noonan, of course, is that girl, and America, protect us all, is that demoralized family.

Peggy Noonan saw Ronald Reagan as a hero who assuaged Americans’ loneliness. They had a mystic faith in a great leader who would rescue them from the dreary isolation of their lives. She believed that Americans looked to him for just the right words (which

she would compose), words that would take “them inside a spinning thing and make them part of the gravity.”³⁴ Ronald Reagan, then, looms over the 1988 election like a “gigantic heroic balloon,” floating “above the written law” (Fawn Hall’s memorable phrase, uttered during her breathless testimony to Congress on Ollie North’s illegal actions), spinning inside the White House “void,” where flowers are ever fresh, where never is heard a discouraging word, where only gravity keeps the republic from flying apart.

When she wrote George Bush’s acceptance speech for the Republican Party’s nomination for the presidency, Peggy Noonan contributed key catchphrases: “a kinder, gentler nation,” “Read my lips—no new taxes,” and “a thousand points of light.”³⁵ This speech fabricated a new image for George Bush. No longer the whining bumbler he had been portrayed, he suddenly appeared assured, safe. Revised, recomposed, Bush became a tough winner.

In August 1990, President Bush, speaking at the dedication of the Richard M. Nixon Library, repaid his debt to his mentor. Bush said that Nixon believed that “politics is poetry, not prose.”³⁶ By which we can only assume that Bush and Nixon would agree with Aristotle in equating “poetry” with “fiction.”

Back in August 1988, in New Orleans, George Bush began to win the image war, conducted on television, against Michael Dukakis. A month earlier, in Atlanta, that did not seem possible, for Dukakis appeared strong, inevitable. His acceptance speech before the Democratic convention was an emotional success, though it contained no memorable phrases or proposals. Indeed, Dukakis seemed determined to avoid both issues and rhetoric, to make the campaign impersonal and drab rather than political or poetical. “Because this election isn’t about ideology. It’s about competence.”³⁷

However, as we read the lips and other body signs of these candidates, points of enlightenment dimmed in a mean-spirited campaign, empty of relevant public policy ideas, a campaign that revealed the compromised character of each candidate, a campaign that demonstrated stunning incompetence by the Democrats and cynical certitude by the Republicans, whose appeal to a range of prejudices (racial, ethnic, nativist) marked a new low in the American political process.

Despite our efforts to forget, the presidential campaign of 1988 still echoes hollow sounds in the spinning center of the American psyche, sounds that call up images and feelings, like lyrics from old songs. “The sleaze factor” — Democrats’ description of corruption in the Reagan administration — and “the character issue” — a standard of moral measure that impaled two Democratic presidential candidates, Gary Hart and Joseph Biden — are phrases that put us back into the 1988 presidential election as though it were yesterday, as though we never left that fetid, rainless summer of forest fires and hot air masses lifting off podiums from sea to shining sea, a summer when we talked about the end of man and the death of the heart.

Pat Robertson, the apocalyptic preacher who thought prayer could divert hurricanes, insisted he was “not a politician” and proved it by fading in the primaries. George Bush was hobbled for a while by the “wimp factor” until he yelled at Dan Rather on CBS. Robert Dole told Bush to “stop lying about my record” on NBC after Bush beat Dole in the New Hampshire primaries, but nothing could stop George Bush, not even his oxymoronic demand for a “flexible freeze.” Gary Hart, the self-appointed “new ideas” man, was struck dumb by a *Washington Post* reporter’s question that established a new standard in journalistic intrusiveness: “Have you ever committed adultery?” To which Hart responded, haltingly, “Ahh . . . I don’t think that’s a fair question.”³⁸ But fairness, like personal mo-

ality, seemed a quaint quality in the cynical atmosphere of 1988. After the pictures of Hart and model Donna Rice aboard the *Monkey Business* on Bimini were published, Hart was sunk, so he said he “never wanted to be president” anyway and dropped out; later he reconsidered and reentered; still later he resigned again. “Where was George?” asked Senator Ted Kennedy at the Democratic national convention. “George was there,” replied President Ronald Reagan at the Republican national convention, but was there any *there* there? All we were certain of was that though Michael Dukakis was, as George Bush accused, a “card-carrying member” of the American Civil Liberties Union, Dukakis was also, by his own testimony “on your side.” Though Republican vice presidential candidate Dan Quayle established beyond any doubt that he was, as his opponent Lloyd Bentsen put it, “no Jack Kennedy,” it did not seem to matter. Numbed Americans watched George Bush’s lips as he promised peace, prosperity, and, yet again, “No new taxes.” On November 8, 1988, Bush-Quayle won 53.9 percent of the popular vote and 426 (to Dukakis-Bentsen’s 112) electoral votes.³⁹

Three studies portray the 1988 election with different emphases but considerable agreement that this was a sad, sordid story. Yet the 1988 presidential campaign and election also serves as a cryptic parable in which we can discern, through a glass darkly, the state of the nation.

In *The Quest for the Presidency: The 1988 Campaign*, Peter Goldman, Tom Mathews, and the *Newsweek* Special Election Team stress the “handlers” of the presidential campaigns, those artists of the possible who composed the images that became “George Bush” and “Michael Dukakis” in America’s mind. Nineteen eighty-eight was

the Year of the Handler in our politics, the final triumph of the image-makers, the computer modelers and the gun-for-hire managers over the process of electing a president. They were, in 1988, like Giotto confronting a bare wall or Joyce a blank page; there were no galvanic issues, no lofty visions, no vivid personalities to get in the way — nothing, that is, to impede their artistic fancies.⁴⁰

“Whatever it takes” is a motivational motto at Ailes Communication Inc., whose president, Roger Ailes, handled George Bush’s advertising. Ailes sold the image of George Bush with the cynical skills of Madison Avenue. Michael Dukakis, equally merchandised, was generally mishandled during his campaign against Bush, his image blurred and tarnished. “It could be fairly said that the George Bush and the Michael Dukakis who were presented for public view were articles of manufacture. The problem, from the governor’s point of view, was that Bush Inc. had created them both.”⁴¹

In *Whose Broad Stripes and Bright Stars? The Trivial Pursuit of the Presidency, 1988*, Jack W. Germond and Jules Witcover are appalled by the video-game atmosphere of this election: the inability or unwillingness of candidates to address the real issues confronting the nation while they pushed buttons to run up high scores of vote totals. Germond and Witcover fault Bush and his Republican handlers — Ailes, Lee Atwater, Jim Baker, and others — for raising nonissues (Dukakis’s patriotism, for example) and for taking the low road in their advertising (the Willie Horton ads, in particular). On the other hand, Germond and Witcover show respect for the Bush campaign team’s professionalism and reveal their contempt both for Dukakis’s irresolution and his team’s ineptness.⁴²

The Republican campaign was quintessentially shallow but dramatically effective. The vice president raced around the country from one camera-ready setting to another, attacking, attacking, attacking. And if the attacks were centered on issues that had

little relevance to the presidency — most notably the pledge of allegiance and the prison-furlough program — it was also true that they provided excellent videotape to enliven the evening news broadcasts. Dukakis, by contrast, clearly didn't know how to play the game. He spent almost the entire time on the defensive, forever explaining, explaining, explaining. And — with one or two exceptions — when the Democratic candidate did try to play the good-videotape, sound-bite game, he made a hash out of it.⁴³

Finally, in *All by Myself: The Unmaking of a Presidential Campaign*, Christine M. Black and Thomas Oliphant (reporters for the *Boston Globe* who covered Dukakis during the campaign; they show the anger felt by Massachusetts residents who felt falsely lifted and then betrayed by the Dukakis candidacy) focus upon Michael Dukakis as a “significant loser.” The candidate’s character — rigid, passionless, technocratic, arrogantly independent yet tentative, a reluctant suitor — defined the character of his campaign. Black and Oliphant write “a case study in how to lose a presidential election.”⁴⁴

In the spring of 1990 Michael Dukakis thought he had finally figured out what the 1988 campaign had been about. He then told the American Civil Liberties Union of Hawaii that the election was *not*, as he had often said, about competence. “It was about phraseology. It was about ten-second sound bites. And made-for-TV backdrops. And going negative.”⁴⁵ Amazingly, it took Dukakis a year and a half to wake up to the most obvious fact of American political life.

“TV had by the eighties become not the final arbiter of reality, but reality itself,” suggests Peggy Noonan. Television makes things “real” to Americans. Television induces “wordbursts” as a form. “TV in a way *was* the presidency.”⁴⁶ And the irreducible reality of television is selling — presenting flattering, warm-and-fuzzy images of products, ads designed to enhance viewers’ empty or anxious lives. So, too, television politics. As Neil Postman puts it in *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, “Just as the television commercial empties itself of authentic product information so that it can do its psychological work [of pseudotherapy], image politics empties itself of authentic political substance for the same reason.”⁴⁷ The *Newsweek* writers describe the televised “debates” between Bush and Dukakis as “politics as game show, ninety minutes of trivia-tease questions, pre-packaged answers and media-hyped suspense.” They concluded that “the election was not about ideology *or* competence — it was about cosmetics.”⁴⁸

The Bush cosmeticians repainted the formerly faint visage of the vice president (a gray, New England patrician) in vivid colors as a no-nonsense patriot (a country-and-western, Texas broncobuster), wrapped in the American flag.⁴⁹ He testified that he was a born-again Christian and an environmentalist; he promised to be the “education president”: he told Americans what his pollsters indicated voters wanted to hear. “Whatever works” worked. Bush’s ads set him amid a swirl of flags, balloons and bunting, Olympic athletes, schoolchildren, police, and ordinary but wholesome (white) middle Americans — guilt by association! In turn, Bush’s team of painters used a tar brush to coat Michael Dukakis, that tepid man, as a dark-browed, wild-eyed, suspiciously foreign liberal who opposed school prayer and the death penalty. Dennis Frankenberry’s commercials were particularly effective. One showed scenes of polluted Boston Harbor and claimed that Dukakis did “nothing” to clean it up — an outrageous distortion of the governor’s record and a distraction from the fact that the Reagan administration had cut funds for such cleanups! Another Frankenberry television spot, which showed prisoners moving through a “revolving door,” shot in grainy chiaroscuro, centering upon a prisoner who looked like Willie Horton — a black man who had raped a white woman while on furlough from a

Massachusetts prison — was most effective, for it made Dukakis's policies seem threatening to every citizen's safety.⁵⁰ Germond and Witcover make sense when they conclude, "George Bush ran a campaign distinguished by a degree of negativism and intensity that had never been seen in presidential politics in the television age — a campaign that appealed to the lowest common denominator in the electorate."⁵¹

But Michael Dukakis is too self-serving when *he* explains his loss by blaming the Bush team's low campaigning techniques. All commentators agree that Bush's advisers seized the day from Dukakis, who had built up a seventeen-point lead in public opinion polls by the time of the Democratic convention. Dukakis dithered — touring western Massachusetts in August, muffling the efforts of his own divided staff — while Bush burned him with negative ads. The Dukakis team belatedly countered with its own images and shaped its own sound bites, but they were less effective. His "counterpunch" commercial, for example, a confusing ad (shot in black and white with a hand-held camera) resembled a documentary; it portrayed Bush advisers "managing" his campaign, and seemed to imply that Dukakis had no media advisers of his own. As Black and Oliphant say, Dukakis's

advertising failure was colossal, stupendous, dramatic, intricate, but also at times side-splitting, thigh-slapping, head-scratching. It was a failure that needed long and complex roots because it was far too gigantic a goof to have been produced by one lone bumbler. To produce a failure this sweeping took scores of people, meetings, committees, plans, proposals, outlines.⁵²

The Bush advisers were major league professionals who knew how to play the game they were in; they could do what needed to be done, while the Dukakis advisers were, it could fairly be said, bush league!

Months after the election of George Bush as president, the League of Women Voters announced a drive to clean up American politics, after "one of the most shameful, insulting and negative presidential campaigns in modern political history." They described the 1988 campaign as "a nightmare for the voters . . . an embarrassment . . . manipulative . . . [with] plenty of mudslinging, distortion and even outright lies."⁵³ Commentators on this sordid affair reflect anger and disgust in their books. The era of Teddy White is long past. His books on presidential elections, beginning with *The Making of the President, 1960*, made the transfer of presidential power into a national epic, a contest of wills and values, through which Americans, mysteriously and wondrously, decided their destiny. In White's myth, Jack Kennedy, the Massachusetts politician who campaigned alone in the snows of New Hampshire against a sitting vice president, emerged as the better man, and the republic was restored. (In 1988 Dukakis seized on the parallels, particularly after he too chose a Texan for a running mate, but Dukakis proved himself to be no Jack Kennedy.) In the campaign analyses of 1988, White's "Camelot" myth yielded to parables of depletion, a political world populated by small men — mean-spirited, manipulative, hypocritical, and empty of redeeming vision.

Black and Oliphant's *All by Myself: The Unmaking of a Presidential Campaign* ironically echoes the White campaign sagas. What once was heroic became parodic in their account of George Bush, who stooped to conquer, and Michael Dukakis, the proud loner who met abuses with self-pitying complaints, the candidate with nothing to say, "a not-ready-for-prime-time player."⁵⁴ Germond and Witcover, in *Whose Broad Stripes and Bright Stars?* though more willing to accept the notion that politics is a game that is played

with varying degrees of skill, also note that “something has gone terribly wrong” in our elections, in which technique has replaced leadership.⁵⁵ The *Newsweek* team’s study, *The Quest for the Presidency*, underscores this point, shifting the metaphor from gamesmanship to power relations. Not a contest of ideals, this

was instead a contest between two men who could not say with any precision why they wanted to be president, or why they ought to be. In the circumstances, there was no agenda to fight for, only victory for its own sake. The result was a contest at manipulation, a war between high-tech button-pushers unburdened by contending visions or issues, and, whatever else one made of the outcome, the better button men surely won.⁵⁶

George Bush had trouble articulating “the vision thing” in 1988, so he shattered Dukakis’s image of character and competence, but Bush was not alone. Only in the final days of the campaign, when all was lost, did Dukakis return to the traditional commitments of the Democratic Party and register a telling attack on Bush, on Reagan, and the me decade, the Republican 1980s.

George Bush wants to help the people on Easy Street. I want to help the people on Main Street. He wants to help those who have already made it. I want to help every American make it. He’s on their side; I’m on your side, because standing on your side is what I think being President of the United State is all about.⁵⁷

By then, however, few Americans were listening.

Kevin Phillips, former Republican Party strategist, was listening, with mounting fury, to what was *not* said during the “brain-dead” 1988 presidential campaign. His outrage at both parties is evident in *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, a scorching indictment of the Republican 1980s, a second “great barbecue” symbolized by conspicuous consumption, garish display, and flaunting vulgarity of the Reagans. The Democrats fare no better in Phillips’s view. During the 1988 election Democrats behaved as they have in the past “during capitalist heydays. Which is to say cowed, conformist and often supportive of the prevailing entrepreneurial, free-market mood.”⁵⁸ As a result, America suffered a massive shift of wealth during the Reagan era, to the benefit of the top one percent of its citizens. Increasingly, we were becoming two nations.

In July 1990, months after the Phillips book was published, in confirmation of his findings, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities announced that the richest one percent of Americans receive 12.6 percent of the nation’s total after-tax income, while the bottom 40 percent of Americans receive 14.2 percent. “This marks a sharp change from 1980, when the top one percent received half as much after-tax income as the bottom 40 percent.” The share of the majority of Americans in between is lower than at any time since the end of World War II.⁵⁹

All of which finally, decisively, answers the question Ronald Reagan so often posed during his 1980 campaign: “Are you better off now than you were four years ago?” “No,” might reply at least 80 percent of America’s citizenry. They were faced with a new president who, by summer 1990, reneged on his read-my-lips pledge of no new taxes and launched a risky military campaign in the Middle East. They were faced with the awesome consequences of Reagan’s deregulation of savings and loan banks, what Charles Schumer, member of the House Banking Committee, called “a horror show of swindling, administrative delusions and Congressional and regulatory bungling” that it is estimated

will cost the nation \$169 billion.⁶⁰ Americans were faced, as well, with mounting national debt and diminishing world status.

The 1990s promise to be a morning after in America — tough times for an aging, hung-over, dehydrated, withdrawal-suffering body politic. As Phillips more optimistically puts it, “The 1990s would be a time in which to correct the excesses of the 1980s, for the dangers posed by excessive individualism, greed and insufficient concern for America as a community went beyond the issue of fairness and, by threatening the ability of the United States to maintain its economic position in the world, created the unusual meeting ground for national self-interest and reform.”⁶¹

All of which, of course, remains to be seen. But Kevin Phillips’s predictions have to be taken seriously because he proved himself a shrewd prognosticator in his 1969 book, *The Emerging Republican Majority*. There he predicted that a Republican populism would displace entrenched, elitist Democrats, which is what came to pass in five of the last six presidential elections. Now, in *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, Phillips sees the Republican cycle coming to an end. America, he believes, is ready for another political transformation, a new redistribution of wealth and power, to the benefit of that “other America” not invited to the Reagan galas. The cowering, imitative Democratic Party, in particular, must seize the day. “Democrats, having run out of New Deal ideas more than twenty years ago, still don’t grasp that Republicanism has been in the White House so long that *its* ideas — from constitutional amendments to protect the flag to further tax cuts — are themselves shrouded in cobwebs.”⁶²

Phillips develops his thesis of cycles by comparing the Reagan years with the Gilded Age (1880–mid-1890s) and the 1920s — Republican “heydays” all, eras marked by anti-regulation, anti-tax, and anti-government policies. Ronald Reagan reduced top individual tax rates from 70 percent to 28 percent — then George Bush pushed for a cut to 15 percent — while Reagan raised some middle-income Americans’ tax rates to 33 percent. “Upper Americans” concentrated in affluent communities along each coast triumphed, as Phillips notes in the opening sentence of his introduction, in “an ostentatious celebration of wealth, the political ascendancy of the richest third of the population and a glorification of capitalism, free markets and finance, . . . [a] second Gilded Age.”⁶³

By 1988, before the election, however, many Americans had developed doubts about Reagan’s rule and his successor, George Bush, despite the country’s apparent affluence. (Thus Dukakis’s seventeen-point lead in the election polls at the time of the Democratic convention.) “One explanation was pervasive national uncertainty about the shape of the American dream — and suspicion that the Republicans were administering it on behalf of the few, not the many.”⁶⁴ Americans had turned away from television programs that celebrated the garish lives of the rich and famous. They were then reading Tom Wolfe’s satire on Wall Street greed, *The Bonfire of the Vanities* (1987). In newspapers they read about Michael Milken, “junk bond” dealer, receiving \$550 million in salary and bonuses in 1987. In movie houses they could see, in Oliver Stone’s *Wall Street* (1987), takeover hustler Gordon Gekko echo Milken’s values: “Greed is good.”

Yet these suspicions did *not* result in a presidential victory for Democrats. Phillips blames Dukakis for this, for not taking a populist line. “Dukakis was too caught up in Massachusetts’ own affluence and high civic culture to promote populist economics — at least until late October, when flagging polls left him no choice.”⁶⁵ Phillips also calls attention to the closeness of the presidential vote: “A switch of 535,000 votes in eleven states, analysts noted, could have elected even Dukakis.”⁶⁶ But the fact remains that the Republi-

cans won with a weak candidate who chose an obscure and absurd figure as his running mate. That is, Americans' suspicions about the Republicans were overwhelmed by their even greater suspicions about the Democrats, particularly about Michael Dukakis, once the Republican propaganda machine went to work waving flags and threatening the republic with Willie Horton. The Democratic defeat was not only a demonstration of incompetence, it was an abandonment of party ideology — perhaps a failure of nerve — for a party which, as Phillips himself notes, seems to stand for nothing in particular except another advocate of corporate America. It is difficult to see a bolder Democratic Party winning the hearts and minds of America in 1992 against a sitting president and a perfected propaganda machine.

Yet a confirming aspect to Phillips's thesis can be found in Mario Cuomo's endorsement. "Phillips says convincingly what Democrats have not been bold enough to say and Republicans won't admit: we have redistributed our wealth from the poor and working middle class to the rich."⁶⁷ At least one potential Democratic candidate for the presidency, one with charisma, high intelligence, and traditional Democratic beliefs, is willing to admit the obvious and, presumably, base a campaign upon the issue of who owns America. By the spring of 1990 the rhetoric of a Cuomo campaign was taking shape — a Bobby Kennedy type of call to service and justice. In a commencement address at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, Cuomo invoked a political vision that reached back to FDR and echoes Lincoln.

Imagine what we could do if we realized the full potential of all our people. Think of it. If we could reaffirm the notion of family and reject — as we always have at our best — the proposition that we can exist and thrive as a house divided — or a world divided . . . fractionalized . . . by sex, or nationality, or race, or color, or religion. If we could rouse ourselves from indifference toward the growing gap between our wealthiest, most fortunate citizens and those who continue to struggle.⁶⁸

That is, as Kevin Phillips predicts, if America could reject Reaganism, the politics of selfishness.

At the Democratic national convention in Atlanta, in the summer of 1988, Neil Diamond's "America" lifted the hearts of delegates. "Got a dream to take them there / They're coming to America. Got a dream, they come to share / They're coming to America."⁶⁹ However, the dream of increasing opportunity was dimming for most Americans during the Reagan era. Even that bastion of unregulated capitalism, the *Wall Street Journal*, noted, "Statistical evidence already suggests that the American dream is fading."⁷⁰ America, suddenly a debtor nation, even discovered that its emblem of capitalist achievement, Rockefeller Center, was foreign owned, as were Brooks Brothers, J. Press, Sohio, Allis-Chalmers, Ball Park Franks, the Las Vegas Dunes Hotel and Country Club, RCA, Tiffany, United Artists, Twentieth Century-Fox, Harper and Row, Doubleday, Bantam, Dell, Viking, Charles Scribner's, and other publishers, record companies, and banks still thought of as American. "While entertainment was becoming one of America's major exports, a diminishing percentage of the firms involved remained under U.S. control."⁷¹ Drugs proliferated throughout the republic, destroying the young and the marginal (economic, ethnic, racial) members of the society. Young Americans had little hope of doing as well as their parents, of owning their own home, much less of surpassing the previous generation. Americans had no national health care system to protect them. The

nation's infrastructure rotted from neglect, its ghettos appalled, its educational system produced cultural illiterates. All of this and more was true of the state of the nation during the "trivial pursuits" campaign of 1988: flags and fustian, balloons and balderdash.

Phillips reminds us that Herbert Croly, in *The Promise of American Life* (1909), blamed excessive individualism, personal and corporate, for "a morally and socially undesirable distribution of wealth" that strained the "social bond" of American democracy. "The remedy, he said, was a 'new nationalism' — a renewal of national spirit through democratically controlled (as opposed to oligarchic) government activism"⁷² Neither candidate in 1988 spoke to these issues. Both, indeed, were apologists for a social system of inequity, leaving the unelectable Jesse Jackson to address, however quixotically, issues of social and economic justice. It is valuable to review the literature of presidential politics on the Reagan era and the 1988 election. To apply George Santayana's famous aphorism, only if we know the recent political past can we avoid repeating its mistakes in the 1992 election.

In 1988 Americans contemplated a distorted vision of themselves in the television campaign for their votes. Bush and Dukakis flattered Americans with pap — ludicrously abbreviated sound bites, cartoonlike pictures of middle-aged men waving and grinning idiotically — and lies about each other's record. As a result we are further removed from a true vision of the promise of American life, that "fresh green breast of a new world," writes Scott Fitzgerald, "that flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes."

For a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder.⁷³

In the presidential election of 1988 Americans learned, like Robert Frost's oven bird, "what to make of a diminished thing."⁷⁴ 🐣

Notes

1. Archibald MacLeish, "Public Speech and Private Speech in Poetry," *Yale Review* (Spring 1938), noted in A. Norman Jeffares, *A Commentary on the Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968), 392.
2. William Butler Yeats, "Politics," *W. B. Yeats: The Poems*, ed. Richard J. Finneran (New York: Macmillan, 1983), 348.
3. W. H. Auden, "September 1, 1939," *The Collected Poetry of W. H. Auden* (New York: Random House, 1945), 57–59.
4. Paul Kennedy, "Fin-de-Siècle America," *The New York Review of Books*, June 28, 1990, 31–40.
5. Hillel Schwartz, "Fin-de-Siècle Fantasies," *The New Republic*, July 30 and August 6, 1990, 22.
6. *New York Times*, July 8, 1987, A-8. "Deception and duplicity have simply become standard operating procedure in the national security state. . . . The tokens of the new mendacity are all about us." Michael Zuckerman, "Charles Beard and the Constitution: The Uses of Enchantment," *George Washington Law Review* 56, no. 1 (November 1987): 92.
7. Nancy Reagan, with William Novak, *My Turn: The Memoirs of Nancy Reagan* (New York: Random House, 1989), 318.
8. *Ibid.*, 267.

9. Garry Wills, *Reagan's America: Innocents at Home* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1987), 387.
10. *Ibid.*, 284–285.
11. Cited in Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), 125.
12. Reagan, *My Turn*, 104.
13. Peggy Noonan, *What I Saw at the Revolution: A Political Life in the Reagan Era* (New York: Random House, 1990), 280.
14. Reagan, *My Turn*, 55. After Chief of Staff Donald Regan resigned, March 3, 1987, William Safire called Nancy “an incipient Edith Wilson, unelected and unaccountable, presuming to control the actions and appointments of the executive branch.” Cited, 333.
15. Barbara Ehrenreich, *The Worst Years of Our Lives: Irreverent Notes from a Decade of Greed* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990), 86–92. Ehrenreich’s summary of Nancy Reagan’s reputation echoes Joan Didion’s 1968 essay for the *Saturday Evening Post*, which portrayed Nancy, then the California governor’s wife, as a smiling woman “who seems to be playing out some middle-class American woman’s daydream, circa 1948.” Curiously, Nancy Reagan preserves this and other damaging criticisms in her memoir, *My Turn*, 35.
16. Reagan, *My Turn*, 33.
17. *Ibid.*, 101.
18. Maureen and Michael, who was adopted, were born during the marriage of Ronald Reagan and Jane Wyman; Patti and Ron are the issue of Reagan’s second marriage, to Nancy Davis, in 1952.
19. Cited in Reagan, *My Turn*, 130–131.
20. Abraham Lincoln, “Annual Message to Congress,” December 1, 1862. *Abraham Lincoln: Speeches and Writings 1859–1865* (New York: Library of America, 1989), 415.
21. Noonan, *Revolution*, 261.
22. *Ibid.*, 87.
23. *Ibid.*, 65, 124, 221.
24. *Ibid.*, 335.
25. *Ibid.*, 32.
26. *Ibid.*, xiii.
27. F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (New York: Charles A. Scribner’s Sons, 1953 [1925]), 2.
28. Noonan, *Revolution*, 132.
29. *Ibid.*, 49.
30. *Ibid.*, 40.
31. *Ibid.*, 291.
32. *Ibid.*, 148.
33. *Ibid.*, 184.
34. *Ibid.*, 69.
35. *Ibid.*, 304, 307, 312.
36. Cited in Sidney Blumenthal, “Yorba Linda Diarist: The Last New Nixon,” *The New Republic*, August 20 and 27, 1990, 43.
37. Michael Dukakis, cited in Christine M. Black and Thomas Oliphant, *All by Myself: The Unmaking of a Presidential Campaign* (Boston: Globe Pequot Press, 1989), 176.

38. These and other key phrases are taken from Jack W. Germond and Jules Witcover, *Whose Broad Stripes and Bright Stars? The Trivial Pursuit of the Presidency, 1988* (New York: Warner Books, 1989), 205.
39. *Ibid.*, 455.
40. Peter Goldman, Tom Mathews, and the *Newsweek* Special Election Team, *The Quest for the Presidency: The 1988 Campaign* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 333–334.
41. *Ibid.*, 334.
42. Germond and Witcover, *Broad Stripes*, 390.
43. *Ibid.*, 401.
44. Black and Oliphant, *Unmaking*, vii.
45. Cited in Chris Black, "Dukakis Rues Ignoring Tilt Toward 'Sound Bites,' Negativism in '88," *Boston Globe*, April 21, 1990, 1.
46. Noonan, *Revolution*, 137–143.
47. Postman, *Amusing*, 136.
48. Goldman and Mathews, *Quest*, 372.
49. "The artists who painted 'George Bush' and 'Mike Dukakis' . . . saw the featurelessness of their clients as an opportunity, a pair of empty canvases inviting court portraits in heightened colors and heroic attitudes." *Ibid.*, 417.
50. Black and Oliphant, *Unmaking*, 226.
51. Germond and Witcover, *Broad Stripes*, 413.
52. Black and Oliphant, *Unmaking*, 234–235.
53. Cited in David Nyhan, "Is Kaufman in Bush's Doghouse?" *Boston Globe*, June 17, 1990, A-21. Nyhan writes about charges that Ron Kaufman, assistant White House personnel director, conspired with the Springfield, Massachusetts, police union to disrupt the Massachusetts Democratic convention in June 1990.
54. Black and Oliphant, *Unmaking*, 302.
55. Germond and Witcover, *Broad Stripes*, xvi.
56. Goldman and Mathews, *Quest*, 15.
57. Black and Oliphant, *Unmaking*, 304.
58. Kevin Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor: Wealth and the American Electorate in the Reagan Aftermath* (New York: Random House, 1990), 47.
59. Associated Press, "Study: Rich Got Richer, Poor Poorer in '80s," *Boston Globe*, July 24, 1990, 34.
60. Charles Schumer, "The S & L Horror Show: Act II," *New York Times*, July 24, 1990, A-21.
61. Phillips, *Politics*, 220–221.
62. *Ibid.*, x–xi.
63. *Ibid.*, xviii.
64. *Ibid.*, 23.
65. *Ibid.*, 5.
66. *Ibid.*, 215.
67. *Ibid.*, cited on dust jacket.
68. Governor Mario M. Cuomo, Remarks, SUNY Stony Brook commencement, Long Island, N.Y., May 20, 1990.

- 69. Cited in Black and Oliphant, *Unmaking*, 174.
- 70. March 31, 1989. Cited in Phillips, *Politics*, 3.
- 71. Ibid., 140–141.
- 72. Ibid., 220.
- 73. Fitzgerald, *Gatsby*, 137.
- 74. Robert Frost, “The Oven Bird,” in Edward Connery Lathem, ed., *The Poetry of Robert Frost* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1969), 120.

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Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1960), 24.

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